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Struggling with the Philosopher

A Refutation of Avicenna's Metaphysics

A New Arabic Edition and English Translation of
Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Aḥmad al-Shahrastānī's

Kitāb al-Muṣāraʿa

by

Wilferd Madelung and Toby Mayer

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Introduction: Al-Shahrastānī, Isma'ilism and Philosophy

Tāj al-Dīn Abu'l-Fatḥ Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153) has long been known in modern scholarship as the author of the *Kitāb al-Milal wa'l-niḥal*, a comprehensive survey of the religions, sects and philosophical schools, first edited by W. Cureton in 1842–1846.[1] Although written from a distinctly Islamic point of view, the book has continued to attract attention and admiration for its non-polemical objectivity and the wide range of its investigation of the currents of human belief and religious thought. Its chapters on the non-Muslim faiths have been described as 'the high point of Muslim histories of religion'.[2] A modern French translation of the book with full annotation has been sponsored by UNESCO with a preface paying tribute to the author's spirit of tolerance.[3]

[1] Al-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-Milal wa'l-niḥal*, ed. W. Cureton (London, 1842–1846).

[2] Guy Monnot, 'al-Shahrastānī', EI2, vol. 9, p. 216.

[3] Daniel Gimaret, Guy Monnot and Jean Jolivet, *Livre des Religions et des Sectes*, vols 1–2 (Paris-Louvain, 1986–1993), Preface by M.A. Sinaceur.

Al-Shahrastānī's major work on scholastic Muslim theology, the *Kitāb Nihāyat al-iqdām fī ʿilm al-kalām,* was first published by A. Guillaume in 1934.[4] It revealed his searching interest in the basic questions of Islamic theology and reflected his expert learning in the Ashʿarī school tradition in which he had been brought up. As an outstanding Shāfiʿī Ashʿarī scholar, he had indeed taught for three years (511–514/1117–1120) at the Shāfiʿī Niẓāmiyya Madrasa in Baghdad made famous by the earlier teaching activity of al-Ghazālī there.

A different aspect of al-Shahrastānī's religious thought was first highlighted by M.R. Jalālī Nāʾīnī and M.T. Dānishpazhūh in the 1960s. Both scholars noted definite Shiʿi and, more specifically, Ismaʿili views in some of his works.[5] These confirmed charges by several Sunni contemporaries of al-Shahrastānī that he, with all his erudition in the religious sciences, adhered to 'heretical doctrine'. Abū Saʿd al-Samʿānī (d. 562/1166), who had heard him teach, reported that he was accused of inclining to the 'people of the mountain fortresses', i.e. the Nizārī Ismaʿilis in Iran, and of spreading their 'heretical' teaching.[6]

Al-Shahrastānī's Ismaʿili views have since been examined in detail by a number of scholars. They are most significant in three of his extant works. The first is a *Majlis,* a sermon in Persian on the two worlds of Creation and Order, delivered by him in Khuwārizm. It was first edited by Nāʾīnī and has been translated into French and analysed by Diane Steigerwald.[7] The second is the Qurʾan commentary *Mafātīḥ al-asrār wamaṣābīḥ al-abrār* composed late in his life. Here he mentions

[4] Alfred Guillaume, *The Summa Philosophiae of al-Shahrastānī* (London, 1934).

[5] Muḥammad Riḍā Jalālī Nāʾīnī, *Sharḥ-i ḥāl wa-āthār-i Ḥujjatuʾl-ḥaqq Abuʾl-Fatḥ Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Aḥmad Shahrastānī* (Tehran, 1343/1964); Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh, 'Dāʿī al-Duʿāt Tājuʾl-Dīn Shahrastāna', in *Nāma-yi Āstān-i Quds,* 7, no. 2 (1346/1968), pp. 71–80; 8 (1347/1969), pp. 61–71.

[6] Al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfiʿiyya al-kubrā,* ed. A.M. al-Ḥilw and M.M. al-Ṭanāḥī (Cairo, 1388/1969), vol. 6, p. 130.

[7] Diane Steigerwald, *Majlis: Discours sur l'ordre et la création* (Saint-Nicolas, Québec, 1998).

having met a 'pious servant of God' who taught him the true methods and principles of Qur'anic exegesis, affirms the divine authority of the *ahl al-bayt,* the Family of the Prophet, to interpret the Qur'an, and in some passages uses Isma'ili terms and concepts in his exegesis. The extant part of the commentary has been published in facsimile and has been analysed in detail in a series of articles by G. Monnot.[8] A critical edition is under preparation by M. 'Alī Ādharshab, of which the first volume has already appeared.[9] The third work is al-Shahrastānī's refutation of Ibn Sīnā's theology entitled *Kitāb al-Muṣāra'a,* first edited by Suhayr Muḥammad Mukhtār,[10] and which is here re-edited with an English translation. The key thesis espoused by al-Shahrastānī in this work is the absolute transcendence of God above all being and comprehension as taught by the Isma'ili tradition. Its formulation tallies closely with doctrines he ascribed to the older Ismā'īliyya or Bāṭiniyya in his *Kitāb al-Milal wa'l-niḥal.*[11]

None of al-Shahrastānī's contemporary Sunni critics suggested that he, while holding what they regarded as heretical views, actually joined the Isma'ili community. Born and educated as a Shāfi'ī Sunni, he continued to identify with the Sunni community and followed the Shāfi'ī ritual and legal practice to the end of his life. Yet his concept of Sunnism evidently moved far away from the contemporaneous orthodox understanding of it and expanded to allow Shi'i veneration of the Family of the Prophet and recognition of the religious authority

[8] Al-Shahrastānī, *Mafātīḥ al-asrār wa-maṣābīḥ al-abrār* (Tehran, 1409/1989), 2 vols; Guy Monnot, 'Islam: exégèse coranique', in *Annuaire de l'École des Hautes Études, Sections des sciences religieuses,* 90–9 (1981–1991).

[9] Muḥammad 'Alī Ādharshab, *Tafsīr al-Shahrastānī al-musammā Mafātīḥ al-asrār wa-maṣābīḥ al-abrār,* vol. 1 (Tehran, 1417/1997).

[10] Suhayr Muḥammad Mukhtār, ed. *Kitāb Muṣāra'at al-falāsifa* (Cairo, 1396/1976).

[11] Al-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-Milal wa'l-niḥal,* vol. 1, p. 147. The same doctrine is described by al-Shahrastānī as that of the Bāṭiniyya and a group of the Shi'a in his *Kitāb Nihāyat al-iqdām,* ed. Alfred Guillaume (London, 1934), pp. 128–30.

of the Shiʿi Imams. In his Qurʾan commentary the breadth of his concept expressed itself in an eclectic use of Sunni and Shiʿi sources and a range of varying avenues of exegesis. In his *Majlis* and the *Muṣāraʿa* his Ismaʿili thought prevails more consistently. Al-Shahrastānī can thus be described as Sunni socially and communally, but as Shiʿi and Ismaʿili in some of his core beliefs and religious thought.

In his *Kitāb al-Milal waʾl-niḥal* al-Shahrastānī describes the teaching of the 'old Bāṭiniyya' in some detail and an objective, detached manner. He then goes on to state that the followers of the 'new preaching' (*daʿwa jadīda*), i.e. the Nizārī Ismaʿilis in Iran, had abandoned this teaching when al-Ḥasan b. al-Ṣabbāḥ began to recruit men and fortified himself in castles. Al-Ḥasan then concentrated entirely on arguing the need of mankind for a truthful Imam at all times and on explaining the way of identifying him. Al-Shahrastānī quotes the gist of al-Ḥasan b. al-Ṣabbāḥ's argument in his programmatic *Four Chapters* (*al-Fuṣūl al-arbaʿa*) and some other treatises. He charges, however, in a distinctly critical tone, that al-Ḥasan prohibited the common people from discussing religious sciences and prevented the elite from consulting older books (of the Ismaʿili literary heritage) except for those who knew the value of each work and the rank of the author in each discipline. Al-Ḥasan's theological teaching to his followers did not go beyond the statement: 'Our God is the God of Muḥammad'. He told al-Shahrastānī: 'But you say: God is the God of the minds', implying that everyone was merely following the guidance of his own mind.

Al-Shahrastānī then complains that the followers of al-Ḥasan b. al-Ṣabbāḥ, whenever he sought to engage in theological discussion with any of them, would confine themselves to al-Ḥasan's statement 'Our God is the God of Muḥammad', and tell him that they had no need of him and could learn nothing from him. Al-Shahrastānī responded, conceding the need for an authoritative teacher and asking them where that teacher was, what he would impress on him in theology and what he would prescribe for him in rational matters. A teacher, he

suggested, is to be sought not for himself, but for his teaching. In his view, they had thus closed the door of knowledge and opened that of submission and blind imitation (*taqlīd*). No person of sound mind would agree to adopt a doctrine without clear understanding or follow a path without evidence.[12]

From these critical remarks it is evident that al-Shahrastānī disapproved of al-Ḥasan b. al-Ṣabbāḥ's policies both in respect to his armed uprising against the Saljūqs and his restriction of the traditional Ismaʿili teaching activity. The Ismaʿilis were in his view part of the Muslim community, in some respects its core, and should not segregate themselves into a separate community. In spite of his basic espousal of traditional Ismaʿili teaching, he was not prepared to join them in their seclusion. The temporary absence of the Imam, moreover, in his view could not justify the suspension of the religious teaching and reasoning based on the guidance of the past Imams. The teacher, as he saw it, was needed not for his physical presence, but for his teaching which awakened and guided the mind to true knowledge. Restriction of teaching, reasoning and debate rather closed the door to it.

The restriction on theological teaching did not last. Al-Shahrastānī's religious views, dismissed by the 'people of the mountain fortresses' as irrelevant during his time, would later attract their interest. The impact of his thought in the Nizārī community, however, seems to have been limited. His works did not become part of the communal literature and were not quoted. Only Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, in his autobiographical account about his own path to Ismaʿilism, mentions him prominently. He refers to him as *dāʿī al-duʿāt* and records that his own father's maternal uncle and teacher was a pupil of his. Al-Ṭūsī's father in turn encouraged him to study all disciplines of knowledge and to listen to the discourse of the followers of various schools and doctrines.[13] The title *dāʿī al-duʿāt* here is,

[12] Al-Shahrastānī, *Kitāb al-Milal wa'l-niḥal*, pp. 147–52.

[13] Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, *Contemplation and Action: The Spiritual Autobiography of a Muslim Scholar*, ed. and tr. S.J. Badakhchani (London, 1998). Persian text p. 6, transl. p. 26.

no doubt, to be understood as merely honorary. While al-Shahrastānī was not a member of the Ismaʿili *daʿwa*, the passage indicates that his teaching and his works spread Ismaʿili thought and encouraged al-Ṭūsī to join the Nizārī community.

His contemporary Sunni critics also faulted al-Shahrastānī for his pursuit of philosophy. The Khwārizmian Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad b. ʿAbbās b. Arslān, author of a history of Khuwārizm, suggested that his inclination to Ismaʿili 'heresy' (*ilḥād*) was the result of his turning away from the light of the *sharīʿa* and his preoccupation with the darknesses of philosophy. He describes him as going to great lengths in backing and defending the doctrines of the philosophers and adds that he attended several of al-Shahrastānī's preaching sessions where 'there was no word of "God has said", nor "the Messenger of God has said", nor any answer to questions of the *sharīʿa*.'[14] This description, it should be noted, fits the extant *Majlis* of al-Shahrastānī only partly, for this sermon, while dealing with esoteric cosmology rather than religious law, abounds with quotations from the Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet.

Ẓahīr al-Dīn al-Bayhaqī, in his supplement to Abū Sulaymān al-Sijistānī's biographies of the philosophers, *Tatimmat Ṣiwān al-ḥikma,* recounts that he criticised al-Shahrastānī for mingling religious exegesis with philosophy (*ḥikma*) and other disciplines in his Qur'an commentary, and told him that the Qur'an should be interpreted on the basis of the interpretation of the Companions of the Prophet and the generation following them (*tābiʿūn*). Philosophy, al-Bayhaqī added, must be kept separate from Qur'an exegesis and, in any case, al-Shahrastānī could not hope to combine religion (*sharīʿa*) and philosophy in a better way than al-Ghazālī. Al-Shahrastānī was filled with anger at this suggestion.[15] With his ironic reference to al-Ghazālī's 'combining' of religion and philosophy, al-Bayhaqī evidently meant that the latter had studied both disciplines but had kept

[14] ʿAbd Allāh al-Rūmī Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-buldān,* ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Leipzig, 1866–1873), vol. 3, pp. 343–4.

[15] Ẓahīr al-Dīn ʿAlī al-Bayhaqī, *Taʾrīkh ḥukamāʾ al-islām,* ed. Muḥammad Kurd ʿAlī (Damascus, 1365/1946), p. 143.

them strictly apart and in fact distanced himself from philosophy in his religious works. Al-Shahrastānī's angry reaction at the mention of al-Ghazālī as a model for him is significant for his attitude to his celebrated predecessor at the Niẓāmiyya in Baghdad.

THE KITĀB AL-MUṢĀRAʿA

Al-Shahrastānī dedicated his *Kitāb al-Muṣāraʿa* to Sayyid Majd al-Dīn Abu'l-Qāsim ʿAlī b. Jaʿfar al-Mūsawī, amir and *naqīb* (syndic of the ʿAlid nobility) of Tirmidh, a high official in the government of the Saljūq Sultan Sanjar. He mentions that he had earlier presented to the Sayyid his *Kitāb al-Milal wa'l-niḥal*, which had attracted his patron's interest and earned his praise. The *Kitāb al-Milal wa'l-niḥal* had in fact, it is known, been dedicated to al-Shahrastānī's previous patron, Sanjar's vizier Naṣīr al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Abī Tawba al-Marwazī. When the vizier fell out of favour and was imprisoned in 526/1132, al-Shahrastānī attached himself to Majd al-Dīn al-Mūsawī. He removed the dedication to Naṣīr al-Dīn from the book and presented a copy to his new patron.

Al-Shahrastānī goes on to announce that he now intends to engage in an intellectual wrestling match (*muṣāraʿa*) with Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), whom he describes as the universally recognised grand master of philosophy of all time, and calls upon Majd al-Dīn to act as a judge between the two contestants in this dispute. This invitation indicates that his patron was no stranger to the philosophical issues involved in the discussion and that al-Shahrastānī was aware of his expert knowledge and views. Al-Shahrastānī had, probably in the time of his employment by Majd al-Dīn, consulted some of the contemporary philosophers, presenting to them his own views and objections to Ibn Sīnā's discourse and asking for their opinions. Thus he exchanged letters with the physician and philosopher Sharaf al-Zamān Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Īlāqī (d. 536/1141) on the question of existence and how it is necessitated in the existents, on the relationship between the cogniser and the objects of

knowledge and on the absolute knowledge of the Necessary Being, God.[16] He submitted objections to Ibn Sīnā's views by letter to the Qāḍī Zayn al-Dīn ʿUmar b. Sahlān al-Sāwī, a pupil of Īlāqī and expert on logic noted for his *Kitāb al-Baṣāʾir al-Naṣīriyya* which he had dedicated to the vizier Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Marwazī.[17] According to al-Sāwī's extant reply to one of al-Shahrastānī's letters, the objections, though formulated by the latter, had come to him from someone to whom al-Shahrastānī felt deeply obliged.[18] Most likely his patron, the Naqīb Majd al-Dīn al-Mūsawī, is meant. The same objections, in different form, are discussed in the *Muṣāraʿa*. To what extent al-Shahrastānī was influenced by the views of these correspondents must remain the subject of future research.

Al-Shahrastānī remarks that he has chosen some of the most solidly argued statements of Ibn Sīnā in the theological part (*ilāhiyyāt*) of his *Shifāʾ*, in the *Najāt, Ishārāt* and *Taʿlīqāt* for his discussion. He imposes on himself the condition of dealing with his opponent only in his discipline and not to oppose him on mere expressions on whose meaning and reality they both agreed, wishing to be neither a disputatious *kalām* theologian (*mutakallim jadalī*) nor an obstinate sophist. His distancing himself from being a 'disputatious *kalām* theologian' deserves special note. Throughout his book, he does not quote or mention al-Ghazālī's famous refutation of the philosophers, the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*, even though several of the questions discussed by him had also been treated by al-Ghazālī. Did he disapprove of al-Ghazālī's work because he considered it merely the product of a disputatious *kalām* theologian? This must seem likely in view of the substantial differences in approach and aim between the two books.

Al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut* falls squarely within the tradition of

[16] See Ādharshab, *Tafsīr al-Shahrastānī,* vol. 1, p. 57. A facsimile edition of the text is provided by Muḥammad Riḍa Jalālī Nāʾīnī, *Dū maktūb* (Tehran, 1369/1990).

[17] See the quotation from ʿImād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī's *Taʾrīkh dawlat Āl Saljūq* in Ādharshab, *Tafsīr al-Shahrastānī,* vol. 1, p. 27.

[18] MS Kazan n. 1125, fol. 107.

Ashʿarī theological apologetics and polemics. Its avowed aim was to destroy the basis of philosophy itself, not to correct some views of the philosophers. Although al-Ghazālī insisted that the book was intended only to refute and not to defend any specific religious doctrine and that he would set forth the true doctrines in a separate work, his yardstick of the truth was in fact the Ashʿarī creed. On its basis he chose to refute the philosophers in twenty issues, charging them with infidelity (*kufr*) punishable with death in three of them, and with heretical innovation in the others. In the common style of *kalām* polemics, he pictured the philosophers as maliciously motivated to dupe the public by trickery and obfuscation and their followers as frivolous fools.

Al-Shahrastānī, in contrast, does not question the legitimacy of philosophy as a supreme discipline of wisdom. He proposes to challenge Ibn Sīnā, whom he recognises as the foremost expert in it, on his own ground in specific questions, relying on chosen quotations from his major works. While he sharply criticises some of his views and the contradictions which he perceived in them, he never raises the issue of infidelity or heresy. In all questions he counters Ibn Sīnā's theses, repudiated by him with his own, which, he asserts, were based on the guideline (*miʿyār*) of the prophets.

On the need for such a guideline, there was obviously agreement between al-Ghazālī and al-Shahrastānī. Given this guideline, however, al-Ghazālī saw the use of human reason in religious thought as confined by traditional Ashʿarī interpretation of Qurʾan and hadith, leading him to denounce philosophical inquiry into metaphysics and theology. For al-Shahrastānī, the guideline was rather the solid foundation for sound rational inquiry into the truth. He justified his daring challenge of Ibn Sīnā by assuring his patron Majd al-Dīn that he himself had risen from the depth of blind acceptance (*taqlīd*) in religion to the pinnacle of rational investigation of the truth and submission to it (*taslīm*), as he had drunk a cup from the paradisical wellspring of prophethood.

The basic idea espoused by al-Shahrastānī against Ibn Sīnā

was, as noted, the absolute transcendence of God beyond existence and comprehension by human reason. God, he maintained, was the existentiator of existence (*mūjid al-wujūd*), the giver of both existence and non-existence. God was above all opposites—such as truth and falsehood, unity and multiplicity, knowledge and ignorance, life and death, good and evil, power and impotence—and their sovereign judge (*ḥākim*). As Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī noted in his refutation of the *Muṣāraʿa,* this was the doctrine of the Taʿlīmiyya, the Ismaʿilis, who said: God is neither existent nor non-existent, rather He is the foundation of being and non-being.[19] In one form or another, this view had been upheld by the Persian Ismaʿili writers at least from Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Nasafī (d. 332/943) on. Al-Ghazālī denounced it in his *Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayn al-islām wa'l-zandaqa* as unambiguous unbelief.[20] Al-Shahrastānī was certainly aware of the condemnation. His adoption of it clearly reveals his repudiation of Ghazālian orthodoxy.

Al-Shahrastānī did not object to Ibn Sīnā's designation of God as the Necessary Being (*wājib al-wujūd*), but insisted that existence could be predicated of God only equivocally (*bi'l-ishtirāk*), as meaning that He is the giver of existence and its opposite. In his refutation, al-Ṭūsī suggested that the opinion that existence belonged amongst equivocal terms was the doctrine of the Ashʿarī school and of the Muʿtazilī Abu'l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī.[21] The ontological basis of the doctrine of these *kalām* theologians, however, was entirely different. For al-Shahrastānī it was a necessary complement to his concept of divine transcendence. Thus he extended the principle of equivocity also to all other descriptions and attributes of God. God is one in the meaning of His giving unity, knowing in the meaning that He gives knowledge, powerful in the meaning that He gives power to the powerful.

[19] Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, *Maṣāriʿ al-muṣāriʿ*, ed. Ḥasan al-Muʿizzī (Qum, 1405/1984), pp. 82–3.

[20] Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Fayṣal al-tafriqa bayn al-islām wa'l-zandaqa,* ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo, 1960), p. 198.

[21] Al-Ṭūsī, *Maṣāriʿ*, p. 83.

The *Muṣāraʿa* was initially planned to deal with seven issues of theology. In the first, al-Shahrastānī questions Ibn Sīnā's division of existence into the necessary and the contingent. He argues that Ibn Sīnā's Necessary Existent, God, cannot be part of divisible existence since this would require Him to belong to a species, separated from contingent things by a differentia. In reality existence cannot be predicated of the Necessary Existent in the same way as it is of the contingent things. Only the existence of the latter can be subject to rational division. Al-Shahrastānī then proposes a comprehensive division of contingent beings in contrast to the division set forth by Ibn Sīnā in his *Kitāb al-Najāt*. In the second issue, on the existence of the Necessary Existent, he pursues further his argument on the equivocity of the term existence in relation to God. He suggests that Ibn Sīnā realised that existence could not apply to the necessary and the contingent in the same way, and that he therefore invented the concept of analogous (i.e. ambiguous) terms as distinct from univocal and equivocal terms. Yet Ibn Sīnā's definition of existence as an analogous, rather than univocal, term does not change the fact that existence would apply essentially to both the necessary and the contingent. Existence, al-Shahrastānī insists, can apply to the Necessary Existent only equivocally.

The third issue deals with the unity of the Necessary Existent. Al-Shahrastānī objects to Ibn Sīnā's treatment of the Necessary Existence as a species before proving the unicity of God, and to his thesis that from the One only a single intellect can proceed. He affirms that the reality of God is necessarily known by innate disposition (*fiṭra*) and that all things are equally in immediate relation to God, irrespective of their sequence and ranking in the universe. The fourth issue concerns the knowledge of the Necessary Existent. Al-Shahrastānī objects to Ibn Sīnā's description of God as intellect, intellecting and intelligible and to his assertion that God knows everything only by way of universals. He maintains that the nature of divine knowledge is beyond the comprehension of the human mind and that it relates equally to universals, particulars, and

changing times and places. In the fifth issue, al-Shahrastānī deals with the temporality of the world. He rejects Ibn Sīnā's thesis that the world is co-eternal with the Creator and affirms that God is beyond both space and time. Eternal circular motion of the heavenly bodies and infinite time, he seeks to prove, are just as impossible as infinite space.

At the end of the fifth issue, al-Shahrastānī states that adverse circumstances and disasters prevented him from completion of the book as planned and he will confine himself to presenting a number of philosophical problems, doubts and perplexities. The sixth issue had originally been intended to deal with the enumeration of the principles (*mabādi'*) of the higher world. It is likely that the seventh issue was to be devoted to the question of the Intellect that is the Giver of Forms, which is now treated briefly at the end of the book. Al-Shahrastānī here agrees with the philosophers about the need for an active Intellect to bring human intellects from potentiality to actuality. He questions, however, why their Active Intellect (*'aql fa"āl*) should be identified with the Intellect of the lunar sphere, the one closest to earth. Could it not be any of the higher Intellects or even the Necessary Existent? And if closeness to humanity is a consideration, could it not be a human intellect that is active and supported by holy power? Al-Shahrastānī evidently had in mind here the Intellect of the prophets and Imams which, according to Isma'ili teaching, conveys the spiritual truths emanating from the hierarchy of higher Intellects to the faithful.

The disasters to which al-Shahrastānī alludes have commonly been identified with the crushing defeat of Sultan Sanjar by the Qarā Khiṭāy at Qaṭwān near Samarqand in 536/1141. It is less likely that he was referring to a temporary imprisonment of his patron, the Naqīb Majd al-Dīn, at an earlier date.[22] In 536/1141, the defeated Sultan fled to Tirmidh and then to Balkh, while the Khuwārizm-Shāh seized and sacked his capital, Marw. In the battle al-Shahrastānī's philosophical

[22] See Nā'īnī, *Dū maktūb,* pp. 23–4.

correspondent al-Īlāqī was killed. It is not known whether al-Shahrastānī was in Tirmidh or in Marw at the time. As Sanjar's reign began to collapse, the intellectual courtly milieu that had encouraged al-Shahrastānī in his philosophical pursuits evidently vanished. He was in no mood to complete his *Muṣāraʿa* as planned.

With its truncated ending, the book probably never had a wide readership. During the time that the Nizārī community was seeking a rapprochement with a broadly conceived Sunnism under the ʿAbbasid caliph al-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh, the Sufi Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn ʿUmar al-Suhrawardī seems to have been attracted to al-Shahrastānī's Ismaʿili thought. In his *Rashf al-naṣāʾiḥ al-īmāniyya wa-kashf faḍāʾiḥ al-yūnāniyya,* written in 621/1224, he polemically denounced both *kalām* theology and Greek-inspired philosophy and adopted some of the terms and concepts of al-Shahrastānī's *Majlis* and *Muṣāraʿa*.[23] It was about the same time that Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, partly under the influence of al-Shahrastānī's thought, joined the Nizārī Ismaʿili community.

The subjugation of the Ismaʿilis by the Mongol conquerors after the fall of their seat of power at Alamūt in 654/1256 opened a period of severe religious persecution. Al-Ṭūsī now abandoned Ismaʿilism and backed the Twelver Shiʿi community to which he had originally belonged. In order to distance himself from the Ismaʿili teaching he had earlier espoused, he composed a refutation of the *Kitāb al-Muṣāraʿa*. His *Maṣāriʿ al-muṣāriʿ* offered a brilliant and incisive defense of the philosophy of Ibn Sīnā, in which he exposed the inadequacy and flawed logic of al-Shahrastānī's criticism. Yet al-Ṭūsī's own highly polemical attack on al-Shahrastānī, describing him as a mere populist preacher picking his ideas at random from various schools without properly understanding them, fails to do justice

[23] See Angelika Hartmann, 'Ismāʿīlitische Theologie bei sunnitischen 'Ulamā' des Mittelalters', in Ludwig Hagemann and Ernst Pulsfort, eds, *Ihr alle aber seid Brüder: Festschrift für A. Th. Khoury zum 60. Geburtstag* (Würzburg-Altenberge, 1990), pp. 190–206; and her 'al-Suhrawardī, Shihāb al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ', EI2, vol. 9, pp. 778–82.

to the latter's thought, which rested on a different, but equally coherent philosophical vision with a vital religious impulse.

Al-Ṭūsī's refutation further blunted the potential impact of al-Shahrastānī's book in the Muslim world. It was now mostly read embedded in al-Ṭūsī's work. The latter enjoyed a certain popularity among Twelver Shiʿi students of philosophy, as indicated by the survival of numerous, though badly corrupted, manuscripts of it in Iranian libraries. Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1640) quoted an argument of al-Shahrastānī from it, siding with al-Ṭūsī's polemical refutation.[24] Among orthodox Sunnis, on the other hand, al-Ṭūsī's defence of Ibn Sīnā's philosophy aroused some sympathy for al-Shahrastānī's work. The Ḥanbalī Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 751/1350) in his *Ighāthat al-lahfān min maṣāyid al-shayṭān* noted with satisfaction that al-Shahrastānī had refuted some of Ibn Sīnā's heresies, which al-Ṭūsī, the 'supporter of atheism' (*naṣīr al-ilḥād*), then attempted to reconfirm.[25] From his description of the contents of the two books, it seems unlikely that he had read them seriously. Al-Ghazālī's *Tahāfut* evidently provided the most persuasive answer to Ibn Sīnā's philosophy from the Sunni point of view. Since in modern times philosophy is no longer so predominantly identified with the Peripatetic tradition, al-Shahrastānī's book may perhaps come to be appreciated as a philosophical response from a broad spiritual perspective.

[24] Muḥammad Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, *al-Ḥikma al-mutaʿāliya fi'l-asfār al-ʿaqliyya al-arbaʿa* (Beirut, 1981–1990), vol. 6, p. 39.

[25] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, *Ighāthat al-lahfān min maṣāyid al-shayṭān*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Fiqī (Cairo, 1358/1939), vol. 2, p. 267.

THE EDITION

The present edition of the *Kitāb al-Muṣāraʿa* is based primarily on two manuscripts:

1. The MS A 1103 of the Landesbibliothek of Gotha, on which the previous edition by Suhayr Muḥammad Mukhtār was based. My thanks are due to the authorities of the Gotha Library for providing me with a microfilm of the manuscript. According to the colophon, it was written by Faḍāʾil b. Abiʾl-Ḥasan al-Nāsikh al-Shāfiʿī and completed on 10 Ṣafar 590/ 20–23 February 1194. Several folios are missing, a few are displaced, and in some places words have become unreadable. In general, however, the quality of the text is fair. In the annotation to the edition, the manuscript is identified by the letter *alif*.
2. The MS n.1124, fol. 5b - 98a, of the library of Kazan. This manuscript was noted by Th. Menzel in *Der Islam,* 18 (1928), p. 94. My thanks are due to Dr Nuriya G. Garayeva of Kazan and to the authorities of the library of Kazan for kindly providing me with a microfilm of the manuscript. The copyist of the manuscript is not named, and it is not dated, but appears from the handwriting to be considerably later than the Gotha manuscript. While the text of the book is complete, some folios were evidently displaced at some stage in the transmission. This was not noticed by the next copyist, so that the text abruptly jumps in several places of the manuscript. The proper sequence could be restored by comparison with the Gotha manuscript and the text preserved in al-Ṭūsī's *Maṣāriʿ al-muṣāriʿ*. The manuscript is well preserved and readable, but the quality of the text is generally somewhat inferior to that of the Gotha manuscript. In the annotation, it is identified by the letter *bā*'.

Apart from these two manuscripts, the text of the *Kitāb al-Muṣāraʿa* as quoted in al-Ṭūsī's refutation *Maṣāriʿ al-muṣāriʿ* has also been compared in establishing the text of this edition.

Particularly useful in this respect was the Istanbul MS Aya Sofya 2358, which preserves the text of the *Kitāb al-Muṣāraʿa* generally better than the Iranian manuscripts of al-Ṭūsī's work. Since al-Ṭūsī's work is to be re-edited separately, the variants provided by these manuscripts have not been noted in this edition of al-Shahrastānī's book.

The title of the book is given as *Kitāb Muṣāraʿat al-falāsifa* in the Gotha MS. In the Kazan MS it is called *Kitāb al-Muṣāraʿa li'l-Shahrastānī maʿa al-Shaykh al-Raʾīs Abī ʿAlī Ibn Sīnā, raḥimahu'llāh*. In his refutation, al-Ṭūsī states that it is known as *al-Muṣāraʿāt*. For the present edition, the title *Kitāb al-Muṣāraʿa* has been chosen.

Wilferd Madelung

NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION

In translating al-Shahrastānī's text, the aim has been to combine accessibility with accuracy (for example in putting Arabic technical terms into English). In the interests of accessibility, square brackets have been used sparingly. Ellipses have thus sometimes been filled out in the English without this being made explicit. Such cases will be obvious to those who co-ordinate the Arabic with the English. For all that, the translation avoids paraphrasing al-Shahrastānī and tries to mirror his speech and thought closely.

My special thanks to Professor Wilferd Madelung, whose advice and assistance have been indispensable, and with whom it has been an honour to work. My gratitude also to Dr Farhad Daftary, whose support and encouragement made the project and my involvement in it possible.

Toby Mayer

Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm b. Aḥmad
al-Shahrastānī

Kitāb al-Muṣāraʿa

In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the Compassionate

Praise be to God—the praise of those who give thanks! And benediction be upon the Seal of the Prophets, Muḥammad the Chosen One, and on his good family—a benediction whose blessing endures to Doomsday!

When the High Council, the prince, the most illustrious and learned master Majd al-Dīn ['Glory of Religion'], prop of Islam, possessor of authority amongst the *sayyid*s,[1] Abu'l-Qāsim ʿAlī b. Jaʿfar al-Mūsawī—may God double his glory and majesty, and lavish his favours and kindness upon him—opened the bazaar of noble deeds, set out on the path to lofty achievements, and revealed the hidden qualities which God (Exalted is He!) had given him and with which He had entrusted him, namely, the two honours of aristocratic nature and pedigree, the two graces of physique and character, the attributes both of knowledge and power, the two sentinels of piety and trustworthiness, and the two shields of intrepidity and courage, besides what he acquired in the way of beauty of virtues and guarding against vices, perfection of knowledge, ultimate wisdom, excellence of morals, beautiful habits, generosity, skill, high-mindedness and eminence of rank, such that were he to compete against all the people of his time with a single one of them, he would have utter superiority and integrity,[2] [then] the least of his servants, Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, came forward to present his paltry wares in the bazaar of his generosity. So he served him by way of a book which he composed 'In Explanation of Religious Denominations and Sects', despite the vacillation of the heart between fear and anxiety. He graciously accepted, and examined it closely, and he succeeded in completely fathoming its meanings and went to great lengths in appreciating his most sincere client. Yet its writer had little to do other than bring all that

[1] *Mālik amr al-sāda*. This refers to Majd al-Dīn's official position as *naqīb al-ashrāf*, syndic of the ʿAlids.

[2] Literally: a pure heart.

had been said together, organise it nicely, and report it well. The depths of the intellect are only plumbed and the worth of a man only becomes clear in the struggle between peers and the combat of heroes. Through trial the cache of what is hidden comes into view and through examination a man comes to be honoured or despised.

There has been agreement that the foremost in the sapiential sciences and the most learned of the age in philosophy is Abū ʿAlī al-Ḥusayn b. ʿAbd Allāh Ibn Sīnā—so no one will follow him in it, even though he destroyed himself,[3] and no one will catch up with him in it, even though he urged on his racehorse. And they are unanimous that whoever arrives at the meaning of what he says and understands the hidden content he has in mind, has won the best arrow,[4] and arrived at the supreme destination. Nay, opposition to him in rejection and confutation and the pursuit of his discourse in denial and contradiction, is a door before which obstacles are thrown up, and which is kept shut by guards and look-outs.

So I desired to fight with him in a wrestling match of heroes, and to clash with him in a battle of men. Therefore, I chose the best and firmest amongst what he says in the Metaphysics of the *Shifāʾ*, the *Najāt*, the *Ishārāt* and the *Taʿlīqāt*, namely, what he demonstrated, investigated and explained. I imposed on myself the condition that I would only deal with him in his craft and would not confront him on any expression on whose meaning and gist we both agreed. Thus I would not be a disputatious theologian, nor a pigheaded sophist. So I would begin by explaining the inconsistency in his actual expressions, in wording and meaning. And I would follow it up by revealing the points of error in the texts of his proofs, materially and formally.

Let the High Council (may God increase it in nobility and elevation!) take up the seat of the judges and arbiters, and let

[3] Literally: even though he destroyed blackness.

[4] *Al-muʿallā* is the seventh and best arrow in the game of chance called *Maysir*.

him decide with truth and sincerity between the two disputants and contestants. For he is most worthy of judging when appealed to for a decision and most fit to guard over veracity when relied upon. Let him know that I have attained the two extremes of learning[5] and let him not underestimate my rank, 'for a man prevails by means of his heart and his tongue'.[6] Let him realise that I have mounted from the foothills of imitation to the heights of realisation and deliverance, and quenched my thirst at the water-hole of prophecy with a cup whose drink is blended from Tasnīm.[7] He who has dived into the sea's depths does not long for a shore and he who has ascended to the summit of perfection is not scared of a descent.

May the High Council remain in possession of the most fortunate star of destiny, the most lucky auspice, the clearest guidance, the most favourable course, the correctest opinion and direction, the most penetrating thinking and reflection, [and may it remain] within an impregnable refuge, namely God Almighty—and 'There is no power and no strength except through God',[8] the Exalted, the Tremendous!

This 'Wrestling' is in regard to seven issues of metaphysics out of a total of seventy odd issues in logic, physics and metaphysics, in which I throttled him with his own bowstring and threw back at him his arrows in regard to his reasoning. I pushed him back into the depth of his pit and up-ended him on his skull in his hole. 'That is [all] through God's generosity towards us and towards men—but most men are ungrateful'.[9]

[5] A proverbial expression: The two extremes are the beginning and end.

[6] For the meaning of the proverb *fa'l-mar'u bi-asgharayhi*, see Edward William Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (Cambridge, 1984), vol. 1, p. 1692.

[7] According to the Qur'an, a fountain in Paradise from which the blessed drink. Qur'an 83:27.

[8] Prophetic hadith: see Bukhārī, VIII, 108.

[9] Qur'an 12:38.

The First Issue: on the Enumeration of the Subdivisions of Existence.
The Second Issue: on the Existence of the Necessary of Existence.[10]
The Third Issue: on the Unity of the Necessary of Existence.
The Fourth Issue: on the Knowledge of the Necessary of Existence.
The Fifth Issue: on the Incipience of the World.
The Sixth Issue: on the Enumeration of Principles—transformed with the seventh into [a series] of difficult issues and puzzling aporiae.

THE FIRST ISSUE

On the Enumeration of the Subdivisions of Existence

Know that the theologians do not enumerate the subdivisions of existence by a comprehensive division. That is because they say 'The existent subdivides into what has a beginning and what does not have a beginning. What has a beginning subdivides into substance and accident'. By 'substance' they mean something occupying space which prevents what is like it in its definition from being where *it* is. By 'accident' they mean what subsists in something occupying space. They declare impossible the existence of a substance which does not occupy space and the existence of an accident which does not subsist in something occupying space. However, while the first division is correct common to negation and affirmation when the conditions of conflict and opposition are complied within it, through agreement on the meaning of 'priority' essentially, temporally, spatially and by nobility, nevertheless the second division is incorrect and not comprehensive if 'substance' is glossed as

[10] For the metaphrastic translation of *wājib al-wujūd* as 'the Necessary of Existence', see Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Studies in the History of Philosophy and Religion,* eds I. Twersky and G.H. Williams (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), vol. 1, p. 404; also George Hourani, 'Ibn Sīnā on Necessary and Possible Existence', *Philosophical Forum,* 4 (1972), p. 75.

what occupies space, and 'accident' as what subsists in what occupies space; since there is nothing in it which indicates the impossibility of the existence of a *tertium quid* neither occupying space nor subsisting in something occupying space—and the philosophers have affirmed intellectual substances which do *not* occupy space. Moreover, what occupies space is something which has a spatial location, and what receives the occupation of space is not the occupation of space itself, for that by which it receives the occupation of space is matter, and the occupation itself is a form within [the matter]. So in consequence, it is a substance compounded from a matter and a form, and the substance cannot be compounded from two accidents. Therefore they must be two substances *not* occupying space. Thus from what occupies space has emerged something not occupying space, and that is most surprising.

As for the philosophers, they have affirmed intellectual substances which do not occupy space, such as intellects, souls, matters and forms. And they affirm accidents which do not subsist through things occupying space, such as 'motions' in quantity and quality, etc.

Ibn Sīnā presented a division at the beginning of the Metaphysics of the *Najāt*, and claimed that it comprehended all the divisions of existents. So I will report it as it is, then I will explain the different errors involved. He said: 'If two essences come together, then if the essence of each one of them is not fully disunited with the other, such as the situation in respect of a peg and a wall (for though both come together, the inside of the peg is not united with anything of the wall, but rather only its surface joins with it), if then it is *not* like the case of the peg and the wall, each one of them exists *pervasively* with all of its essence in the other. Next, if one of them has a stable condition with the separation of the other, or one of them contributes a meaning by which the thing comes to be attributed by some attribute and the other acquires it, then the stable one and the one which acquires it is called a 'substrate', and the other is called an 'inherer' in it. Next, if the substrate is independent in its subsistence of the inherer in it, we call it a 'subject' for it.

And if it is not independent of it we do not call it a subject, but perhaps we call it matter.'[11]

'Every essence which is not in a subject is a substance, and every essence whose subsistence is in a subject is an accident. So something could be in a *substrate* and despite that be a "substance not in a subject"—if the proximate substrate which it is in, is subsistent through it and is not *self-subsistent*. Then it is a constituent of it and we call it a "form". As for the proof of this, we will give it later. Every substance which is not in a subject must either not be in a substrate at all, or must be in a substrate, which substrate is not independent of it in subsistence. So if it is in a substrate, which substrate is not independent of it in subsisting, we call it a "material form". And if it is not in a substrate at all, then either it is a substrate in itself, containing no composition, or it is not. Then if it is a substrate in itself, we call it "unqualified matter". And if it is not, then either it is composite like our bodies which are compounded of matter and corporeal form, or it is not composite, and we call it a "separate form", like the intellect and the soul. As for if the thing is in a substrate which is a subject—we call it an "accident".'[12]

Shortly before this section he had mentioned that existence is split up into a kind of division between accident and substance, and he mentioned in a chapter after it the proof of the Necessary of Existence, saying: 'We do not doubt that there is existence, and all existence is either necessary or contingent.'[13] I say in rebuttal (and help is from God!):

Are the first two divisions—namely, substance and accident—from the divisions of existence qua unqualified existence, or from the divisions of existence qua contingent existence? If it is the first, then the Necessary of Existence is included in the category of substance, and its counterpart is accident. Then, substance is subdivided into the necessary in itself and the

[11] Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, ed. Muḥyi'l-Dīn al-Kurdī (Tehran, 1346 SH/1967), p. 200.

[12] Ibid., pp. 200–1.

[13] Ibid., p. 235.

contingent in itself, and it is implied that substantiality is a genus and necessity is a differentia, so the Necessary of Existence is compounded from a genus and a differentia. This absurd implication is confirmed by his statement in describing substance: it is the existent which is not in a subject. For the Necessary of Existence is an 'existent not in a subject'. And if he gives the excuse for it that substance is the *quiddity* of something such that when it exists its existence is not in a subject[14]—well, that excuse is not what is understood from the description mentioned, explicitly or implicitly. Rather it is only indicated by way of consequence and implication.[15]

If the first two divisions (I mean substance and accident) consist in subdivisions of one of the two divisions, namely the contingent, then it is correct in meaning but incorrect in the expression. However, in explaining one of the divisions, namely substance, he has produced that which includes what is more general and is equal to it. Thus he said 'substance is the existent not in a subject'. And this in itself includes the Necessary of Existence and is equal to It. Then I do not deny that the more general term subdivides into different kinds of division in various ways, as we may say: the existent subdivides in one kind of division into what has a beginning and into what does not have a beginning, and in another kind of division into cause and effect, and in another kind of division into necessary and contingent. But substance and accident are different from that, nay, they consist in subdivisions of the contingent, not subdivisions of existence.

We will come back to existence and whether it is divisible or

[14] See *al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt* with Ṭūsī's commentary, ed. Sulaymān Dunyā (Cairo, 1957–1960), vol. 3, pp. 479–80.

[15] Ibn Sīnā's defence is that the Necessary is not a quiddity. So though it is technically true that It is an 'existent not in a subject', It will not be counted as a substance. In that case we would not have to divide substance up between the necessary and the contingent, and we will not produce the absurdity that 'necessary substance' is compounded of the genus 'substance' and the differentia 'necessity'. Instead substance is always contingent in status.

not, God willing. As for his statement, 'If two essences come together, then if the essence of each one of them is not fully disunited with the other', to his statement 'each one of them exists pervasively and fully in the other …';[16] I say, this proposition is contradictory in various ways, and the consequent does not follow from the premise directly or indirectly. For two accidents are two essences which come together in a substrate, yet each of them is neither fully disunited with the other nor is it pervasively and fully in the other. And the situation in respect to matter and form is different from that, for form is pervasively and fully in matter and matter is not pervasively in form nor united with its surface, so each of them is *not* pervasively and fully in the other. Also the situation in respect to the body and the accident is analogous, for the accident exists pervasively and fully in the body, while the body is not pervasively and fully in the accident, nor united with it by its surface. Likewise the situation in respect to the intellect and soul is that they are two essences in union, but one of them does not unite with the other by its surface, nor is it pervasively and fully in it.

So it is known from that, that union is in various ways and of different kinds, and the union of two bodies is different, and the union of two accidents is different, and the union of matter and form is different, and the union of intellectual substances is different. So why did he present them in a single manner, striking haphazardly? That is not in accordance with logic.

His statement 'Next, if one of them has a stable condition with the separation of the other …' is a division without a counterpart. Instead, he ought to have said, 'or does not have a stable condition with the separation of the other'. For surely the mention of one of the two divisions does not indicate the other.

Then he changed the expression to his statement 'or one of them contributes a meaning by which the thing comes to be

[16] Al-Shahrastānī typically paraphrases rather than quotes, hence the slight difference in wording.

attributed and the other acquires …' [This is] a correct division; except that he makes the stable and acquiring thing a substrate, and the unstable and contributive thing an inherer. Consequently he must make form unstable, along with the fact that it is contributive, and matter stable, along with the fact that it acquires. But stability is more appropriate for what contributes than for what acquires.

On the other hand, the substrate may be matter, and it is what is not independent in its subsistence of what inheres in it, namely the form. And it may be a body, and that is what *is* independent in its subsistence of what inheres in it, namely the accident. So the first of the two substrates is stable through the inherer, and the second is stable through itself. So how are they equal in substrate-status?

However, he called the substrate which is independent in its subsistence of the inherer, 'subject', and that which is not independent, 'matter'. 'Subject' is body, since body is independent in its subsistence of the inherer; and therefore he said at the end of the chapter: 'If the thing is in a substrate which is a subject, it is called an "accident".' Thus the meaning of his statement 'Every essence which is not in a subject, is a substance' is: every essence which is not in a *body* is a substance. And it comes down to it being said that 'every essence which is not in a substance, is a substance', but this does not consist in what amounts to an elucidation. Nay! It is more like the discourse of madmen, and most far from the ways of rational men. And if 'subject' has no meaning other than what we have mentioned, let him establish an existence other than a word for it, or a counterpart for it other than itself—and he will find no way to do it!

However, another division is feasible along the lines of his discussion, such that it is said: You have treated matter as a substrate not independent of the inherer, [either] in its subsistence as existent or in its subsistence as a quiddity. But if you say: 'it is a substrate which is not independent of the inherer, in its subsistence as existent'—well, many substances and bodies are not independent of what inheres in them by way of accidents

in their subsistence as existent, and despite that the substrate is not matter and the inherer is not form. And if you say: 'it is a substrate which is not independent of the inherer, in the subsistence of its quiddity'—that is not accepted. For matter has a quiddity and reality by itself without form being its constituent part. Were form a constituent part of it, it would be impossible for the idea of it to be inscribed in the mind *without* its constituent part. Also were the form a part of it, matter would be compound and not simple. Thus it has been established that matter needs form in respect of its existence not in respect of its quiddity. However, every substance receptive of an accident shares [this trait], for there are substances which do not dispense with some of the accidents in existence, like being in a place or being in a time, or some of the quantities, or some of the qualities, and position—just as matter does not dispense with form in existence. So what is the difference between the two divisions? This is a doubt we put forth. Where is the escape from it? 'But it is no longer the time to escape!'[17]

As for the divisions of substance which Ibn Sīnā mentions, they are not enumerated through negation and affirmation which are opposites, such that conflict would be apparent in the disjunctive propositions, so no division stands out, nor could a division be added to them. Instead, amongst the divisions there is that for which he has not mentioned a counterpart, so it remains lame; and amongst them is where he mentioned a condition in a division which he did not mention in its counterpart, so it is crooked, such as his statement: 'Every substance not in a subject is either not in a substrate at all or it is in a substrate, which substrate is not independent of it in its subsistence.' But in the disjunctive proposition based on the condition of conflict he ought to have said: Every substance either is not in a substrate at all or is in a substrate. In that case the division would not have been a division of substance but of existence which is more general than it, for accident is included in the second division. So if he took the restriction and

[17] Qur'an 38:3.

condition into account in one of the divisions, then it is necessary that he take them into account in the second division; but if they are not taken into account, the division is invalid and conflict is not apparent in it.

Like that is his statement in respect of the second level: 'If it is not in a substrate at all, then either it is a substrate in itself without composition, or it is not.' It may be that he has somehow abridged here, and he should have said: Either it is a substrate in itself or it is not, and what is a substrate in itself either contains composition or does not, or, what is a substrate in itself must either be simple or compound. Then the simple substrate is prime matter and the compound is the body.

However, this division only applies to a substrate which is not independent of an inherer in subsistence, not to the substrate unqualified. For the unqualified substrate is a substrate for substance and accident together. Prime matter is a simple substrate for form and it is a substance, not a substrate for the accident, and the body is a compound substrate for the accident, not for the substance. And it is wondrous that the body should only be a substrate qua possessor of prime matter, not qua possessor of a form, since substrate-status suggests receptivity and predisposition, and this belongs to prime matter, not to form. Consequently the two divisions come down to a single division.

As for what he said: Whatever is not an inherer nor a substrate must be an intelligible form which is the intellect or the soul—it is pure arbitrariness, since the division does not imply the conceivability of the existence of the two, and he did not establish a proof for their existence, nor are the two similar in substance-status and reality. And the division which he put forward disregarded the divisions of substances, namely, the substances secondary by way of species and tertiary by way of genera. Further he did not take in all the genera of substances, nay, he did not mention a division which exhausts all existents in their species, their individuals, their substances and their accidents, such that by intellectual division the possibility of

their existence becomes clear, and by intellectual proof the verification of their existence.

With the help of God (Exalted is He!) we will present a division comprehending [all] that, so that one power of knowledge is distinguished from the other, and one man from the other.

So we say: The existence the meaning of which is inscribed in the intellect and includes the quiddities of all things equally, is susceptible to *intellectual* division. For that which does not consist in univocal terms is not susceptible to division in regard to the [actual] *meaning*. That subdivides by the first division into what is a substrate for an inherer, into what is an inherer in a substrate, and into what subsists by itself not as a substrate nor as an inherer in a substrate. The substrate is that in which the inherer inheres in a pervasive manner, I mean that the inherer is in it in such a manner that it is in all of it. That subdivides: into what is not independent of the inherer in its subsistence, and we mean thereby that what it has by itself is only potentiality and predisposition, and existence occurs for it only through what inheres in it, and it is simple, not compound, and is called prime matter; and into what *is* independent in its subsistence of what inheres in it, and it is called the subject, and the predicate is predicated of it, and that is the body. Since the body is compounded from matter and form, and it is a substance, its two parts are two substances. For the substance cannot be compounded from two accidents, nor can the body be compounded from two intellectual substances.

As for the inherer—it subdivides: into that which its substrate is not independent of in its subsistence, and that is the corporeal form, such as spatiality and conjunction which has no contrary; and into that which its substrate is independent of in its subsistence, and the substrate is not altered by its substitution, such as being in a place, and the conjunction which is the contrary of separation, and it is called an accident. The divisions of accidents are limitless in number by way of negation and affirmation, except that they are limited to the nine categories, and they have been limited in respect of quantity and quality. The substrate includes what is simple and it includes

what is compound, and the inherer includes what is a substance and it includes what is an accident. The substrate and inherer together are a particularised individual. Individuals are called primary substances, species are called secondary substances, and genera are called tertiary substances because of their proximity to and remoteness from sense-perception; and if you go in reverse—because of their proximity to and remoteness from the intellect.

As for what is self-subsistent which is neither an inherer nor a substrate, but instead is independent of them both, it must either have a connection with the two of them or not have. What has a connection either has the connection by the emanation of the inherer in the substrate, or the connection of establishing the substrate by the inherer, or the connection of the management of the inherer and the substrate together. What has the connection of the emanation of the inherer upon the substrate is the Active Intellect, the Dispenser of Forms, for the forms and accidents which are incepted in matters and substrates are by way of its emanation and because of it. And what has the connection of the establishment of the substrate by way of the inherer is the universal nature flowing in all the lower corporeal existents, preparing them for the reception of forms and accidents. And what has the connection of the management of the inherer and the substrate together such that they proceed to their perfections from their origins—it must either manage everything, I mean the world as a whole, and its management is a universal not particular management, then it is called universal soul or it must manage the particular bodies, I mean one rather than another. And that subdivides: into things which manage the heavenly bodies which are insusceptible to generation and corruption, then they are called celestial souls, and they are as numerous as the celestial spheres and stars, which are [either] established by observations, or escape the observations of men; and into things which manage the terrestrial bodies which are susceptible to generation and corruption, and they are: [a] the vegetable and animal souls which are corrupted by way of the corruption of the humours, and

their management is by a natural subjugation; and [b] the human souls which are *not* corrupted by way of the corruption of the humours, and their management is by an intellectual choice.

As for what does not have a connection with the substrate and the inherer—I mean the things separate from the matters of bodies—wisdom does not rule that they should be idle. Rather they have the connection of the conception of the absolute good in the souls which are the managers by command. So it is necessary for every soul to have an intellect, just as every heavenly sphere has a soul, and it has active, not passive intellections. It is also necessary for the universal soul to have a universal intellect, and the intellect has a universal intellection from which emanates the absolute good upon everything by the medium of the soul, and existence ends up in it, just as existence originated *from* it, as an ordered series connected to the Command of the Creator, Who is exalted and sanctified above His glory falling within the hierarchy of existents or contrariety in beings. For He is the ultimate object of longings and through Him is the obtainment of desires. Intellects are in need of Him for the intellection of universals and particulars, souls are dependent on Him for managing celestial and mundane things, and natures are subject to Him—both simple ones and compound ones. 'Are not the creation and the Command His? Blessed be God, the Lord of the Worlds!'[18] 'He is the Living, there is no god but He! So call upon Him, making religion pure for Him. Praise belongs to God, the Lord of the Worlds!'[19] O God, benefit us by that which You teach us, and teach us that by which You benefit us, by the truth of the Chosen Ones amongst Your servants—upon them be peace!

[18] Qur'an 7:54.
[19] Qur'an 40:65.

THE SECOND ISSUE

On the Existence of the Necessary of Existence

Ibn Sīnā said: 'We do not doubt that there is existence. And it is subdivided into the Necessary in Itself and the necessary by another, which is contingent in consideration of itself.'[20]

'A single thing cannot simultaneously be necessary of existence in itself and by another.'[21]

'Nor can the essence of the Necessary of Existence in Itself have elements which combine, such that the Necessary of Existence is established by them, neither parts of a definition, nor parts of a quantity. Nor do each of the parts of the statement which explains the meaning of Its name signify something which in existence is not the other in itself.'[22]

And he said: 'The Necessary of Existence in Itself is necessary of existence from every aspect. And every necessary of existence in itself is absolute good, absolute perfection and absolute truth.'[23]

And he said: 'Nor can the species of the Necessary of Existence belong to other than Itself, since the existence of the species belongs to It due to Itself.[24] So it cannot be that two necessaries of existence share in the necessity of existence, such that necessity of existence is general for them both as a genus or concomitant, with a generality by equality. Instead Its individuation is because it is simply Necessary of Existence, not because of a factor other than Its individuated essence.'

'Further, every contingent in consideration of its essence possibly exists and possibly does not exist. Thus when existence preponderates over nonexistence, it certainly needs a preponderator. And the preponderator for all the contingents must be *non*-contingent in consideration of itself, but instead it must be necessary in itself, outside the series of contingents.'

[20] Compare Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, p. 235.
[21] Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, p. 225.
[22] Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, pp. 227–8.
[23] Compare Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, p. 229.
[24] Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, p. 229.

Rebuttal

We will enumerate the inconsistencies in his argumentation. Then we will set about refuting and invalidating it.

His statement 'The necessary of existence might be by itself and it might be by another' which is a claim of the generality of the necessity of existence belonging to the two divisions, and his statement 'And it cannot be that two necessaries of existence share in the necessity of existence, such that necessity of existence is general for them both, as a genus or a concomitant', are two contradictory propositions. For a meaning which is not general cannot be subdivided and if it is subdivided then it has been made general. Because of this his claim is correct that one of the necessaries is due to itself and the second is due to another. But this is either an essential or a concomitant division, for if there were not an essential or a concomitant generality, then the claim would not be correct.

The Second Inconsistency. His statement 'Each of the parts of the statement which explains the meaning of Its name cannot signify something which in existence is not the other in itself.' Yet the simple statement 'Necessary of Existence in Itself' contains three terms: 'necessary', 'existence' and 'in itself'. Each term signifies a meaning other than the one signified by the next term. On account of this the division is correct such that it be said: 'existence subdivides into a necessary and a contingent, then the necessary subdivides into what is necessary by itself and into what is necessary by another'. Inevitably, each division gives notice of something other than what the next gives notice of, and signifies something which in existence is other than what the next signifies. That is an obvious inconsistency.

It is wondrous that he says: 'The Necessary of Existence does not have quantitative parts, like the body compounded of matter and form, nor parts of a definition, like what is compounded of genus and differentia, nor parts of a generality and a specificity, like colouration and whiteness.' So how did he make existence include the two divisions 'necessity' and

'contingency', then make necessity specific to It? And how did he make necessity of existence include the two divisions 'necessity by itself' and 'necessity by another', then make 'necessity by itself' specific to It? Is that not an unequivocal assertion that there are parts of a generality and a specificity, like colouration and whiteness? Unless he completely shuns these divisions and expressions, so that he says: 'It is some sort of reality which is ineffable.' He has mentioned this in other places in the *Shifāʾ* and elsewhere, when he had become alert to the like of these absurd implications, except that he contradicted that in saying 'The interpretation of the word for It is that Its existence is necessary by itself'. How extraordinary is something ineffable, the word for which has an explanation! Why did he not say: 'When the discourse comes to God, let them abstain?'[25]

The Third Inconsistency. His statement 'The Necessary of Existence by Itself is necessary of existence from every aspect', and he set about demonstrating it. But since It does not have 'aspects', neither perceptible spatial aspects, nor intelligible relational aspects, how is it that he bothered himself in demonstrating that It is necessary of existence from every aspect? He is like someone who sets about demonstrating that It is necessary of existence in regard to all Its parts and definitions, after explaining that It *has* no part and definition.

Stranger than this is his statement 'Every [*kull*] necessary of existence is absolute good'. We do not understand the meaning of this 'every'. Is it *whichever* individual necessary of existence is absolute good? Then in consequence it is a species or a genus. Or, does he mean thereby that *all* [*kull*] of its essence is absolute good, such that he makes out that it is a whole which has parts? What is that unification even in the expression, and what is this pluralisation even in the meaning?[26]

The Fourth Inconsistency. His statement 'Nor can the species of the Necessary of Existence belong to other than Itself.'

[25] Imāmite hadith. See Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* (Tehran, 1376–1392/1956–1972), vol. 3, p. 259.

[26] In this ellipsis, al-Shahrastānī scorns the lack of divine unity in Ibn Sīnā's wording, and claims plurality even extends to his meaning.

But how did he consider that it *could* be said 'The species of the Necessary of Existence is constituted by Itself', just as it is said in regard to the sun 'its species is constituted by its individual'? Does he not understand that the negation of many deficiencies from the Real (Exalted is His Majesty!) is a deficiency for Him? As the weavers amongst the literalists and the lowest story-tellers say:[27] 'Neither body, nor substance, nor something shaped, nor measured, nor elongated, nor round, nor square, nor pentagonal, nor obligated, nor put together', and the rabble of humanity respond, 'Glorified is God! Glorified is God!' So Ibn Sīnā set about protracting the chapters in his books with the negation of the like of these attributions from the Necessary of Existence in Itself, prior to proving It. Then he set about proving It by saying that contingents depend on the Necessary of Existence in Itself. So it is as though he grasped It by Its species-status in the mind and established what follows from Its species-status consisting in the negation of these features; then he grasped It by Its individuality such that he proved It on the basis of the contingency in contingents and their dependence on something which is Necessary of Existence in Itself. This is nothing but haphazardness and shooting in utter blindness, and a negation of deficiencies which is an affirmation of deficiencies!

As for the invalidation of what he argued and uttered, we say: in your statement 'we do not doubt that there is existence, and either it is necessary in itself or it is contingent in itself', you have made a counterpart for the Necessary of Existence, namely, the contingent in itself. It is implied by that, that existence includes two divisions which are equal in respect of existence-status, so that it is suited to be a genus or a concomitant tantamount to a genus. And one of the divisions is distinguished by a meaning which is suited to be a differentia or tantamount to a differentia. Thus the essence of the

[27] The weavers were a byword for the lowliest of society, and the professional story-tellers (*qāṣṣa*) were considered an ignorant, popular contrast to the religious scholars ('*ulamā*').

Necessary of Existence is compounded of a genus and a differentia, or what is tantamount to them by way of concomitants. That contradicts unity and it contradicts absolute independence. For whatever is compounded from two things or from two considerations—a generality and a specificity—is deficient, in need firstly of its constituents for its reality to be realised, and in need secondly of the thing which compounds it for it to existentialise its quiddity.

If Ibn Sīnā says: 'I do not make existence general, inclusive of the two divisions with an equal inclusion, for it belongs to ambiguous not univocal terms. It is more appropriate and primary in the Necessary of Existence, and *not* more appropriate and primary in the contingent. What is amongst ambiguous terms is not suited to be a genus. Rather, univocal terms which include quiddities with an equal inclusion are suited to be a genus. So what you impose as an absurd implication is not implied and what I established is not refuted.'[28] I say: You beg the question in two ways. The first of them is that the division of existence into the necessary in itself and the contingent in itself is *itself* the division of existence into that for which existence is more appropriate and primary, and into that for which it is *not* more appropriate and primary. Existence includes the two of them with an inclusion equal in respect of existence-status. And existence is something essential to the two divisions that are most specific to it, although it is accidental in relation to substance and accident, and the rest of the quiddities.

You have recognised from the definition of the essential that when you make it present in the mind, and you make present what it is essential to, the conceptualisation of what it is essential to is only possible for you through that thing present in the mind. Its existence in the mind is through its existence, not just *with* its existence, and its elimination from the mind is through its elimination, not *with* its elimination. The situation with regard to the Necessary and existence is like that, for the

[28] Compare Ibn Sīnā, *al-Mubāḥathāt*, ed. Muḥsin Bīdārfar (Qum, 1414/1993–4), pp. 218–19.

conceptualisation of the Necessary of Existence is only possible for you through the prior conceptualisation of existence, and when you eliminate existence necessity is eliminated through its elimination. When the man [Ibn Sīnā] had become aware of the like of this absurd implication, he invented for himself a division beyond the univocal, designating it 'the ambiguous'. That is not in the logic of the sages, nor will it protect him from starvation, nor is the absurd implication fended off by it! Even supposing that it is an authentic division, it is not specific to existence. Instead, the like of it applies to 'unity', 'causality', 'truth', and all general concepts consisting in genera and species. Thus it can be said, 'unity is applied to anything single, but it is most appropriate to the First'. 'Cause, truth and origin are applied to other than the Necessary of Existence, but are most appropriate to It.' And 'the term substance is applied to anything which, when it exists, its existence is not in a subject, but it is most appropriate to intellectual substances.' On this basis the division of the univocal would be eliminated and no word would comprise a meaning by equality.

The second way. We say, granted that existence is amongst what is ambiguous, and that it is another division. Is it not the case that existence is common to them both with some sort of generality, and necessity is specific to It with some sort of specificity; and that by which it is general is different from that by which it is particular? Then, It involves the compounding of two aspects by way of two terms, each of which signifies something different from what the second signifies. That negates absolute unity.

If he says 'the meaning of necessity is negative not positive, or relational not existential, so multiplicity is not implied in Its essence', I say our argument is firstly in respect of existence, then in respect of necessity. What do you say in respect of existence and the concept of it in the mind? Is it a general proposition, and an idea which includes the Necessary and the contingent with some sort of inclusivity, or not? If it does include, then there must be particularisation via another idea so that the Necessary is distinguished from the contingent. You

cannot say 'the inclusive idea is a negative thing', since how could *existence* not be existential? Necessity is the confirmation of existence, i.e. existence belongs to It by Its essence, and so it follows for It that It is not derived from something else. How then did he take the consequent into account, yet leave out what was essential to It?[29] If necessity were a negative thing, then that to which it stands opposite—namely, contingency—would be an existential thing. Yet we know that you know that existence and affirmation are more appropriate to the Necessary, and nonexistence and negation are more appropriate to the contingent. How, when you have confirmed that existence is more appropriate and primary for the Necessary, and not more appropriate and primary for the contingent, did you forget the category of the ambiguous which you thought up? And even granted that the idea of it is a negative thing, it is not an absolute negation. Instead, it is the 'negation' of something in whose nature it is to be realised and which is suited for distinction, and through it multiplicity occurs. Leave aside what has been said: 'negations and relations do not necessitate multiplicity in the essence'. For they take this proposition as incontestable, but the matter is not like that, in accordance with the detailed analysis which is to come.

As for his statement 'the distinction between existence and necessity by way of generality and specificity is something relational in the mind, not in existence', it is the admission of the evidence for the absurd implication. For the distinction between the idea of being a genus and the idea of being a differentia is [always] only in the mind. So *in existence* there is no 'animal' which is a genus, and 'rational' which is a differentia, instead they are two considerations in the mind, not in the external world. How would a universal thing occur in external existence, there being no universal except in the mind? You know well that colouration and whiteness are two intelligible

[29] Since necessity is the 'confirmation of existence', the existence of the Necessary is not derived from anything else. Ibn Sīnā, allegedly, affirms the latter (=the consequent) but in claiming that necessity is negative in status he would have denied the former (=the antecedent).

considerations in the mind, not in the external world, and that in existence the *colouration* of white is nothing but whiteness.

The man comes back and says: The proliferation of considerations which ensue from the proliferation of terms, generally and specifically, in reality goes back to the proliferation of relations and negations in respect of the Necessary of Existence. For our statement 'It is the origin of existence, its cause, willer, and originator', is the relation to It of existence and [also] of its emanation from It, without anything thereby being incepted for It, or Its essence being multiplied by something. Our statement: It is Necessary of Existence by Its Essence, means, It is an essence from which the need for another is negated. Generality and specificity of existence are one in respect of Him (Exalted is He!), for His necessity *is* His existence, and His individuation does not entail something else which individuates Him, as a concomitant or not as a concomitant. And His unity does not require some other idea which unifies Him, for He is one because He is Necessary of Existence. Our statement 'because He is …' is not in reality providing [Him] with a cause. Instead the meaning of it is that He is only thus, and this is the meaning of my statement 'the Necessary of Existence is only one from every aspect'. And my statement 'the multiplicity of relations and negations does not necessitate a multiplicity in Its essence', is a proposition accepted by everyone. Surely, our statement 'this body is near to so-and-so, far from so-and-so, [and] does not contain such and such an attribute' does not necessitate a multiplicity in the body's essence, in spite of [the latter's] susceptibility to multiplicity; so what is the state of affairs with an Essence sanctified above the characteristics of multiplicity and change?

I say: Concepts in the mind—general and specific—of general and specific terms, are not inasmuch as they are linguistic terms. Concepts in the mind are only correct due to their correspondence with what is outside the mind. I do not mean by 'correspondence' that the universal in the mind corresponds with a *universal* in the external world—since a universal entity is not to be found in individuals. Rather the universal in the

mind corresponds with every single individual amongst what is particular in the external world. As universal humanity in the mind corresponds with every single individual amongst what exists or does not exist. Then, the distinction between one species and another is only by way of essential differentiae, and the distinction between one individual and another is only by way of accidental concomitants.

Since that is proven, it is clear that general existence includes the Necessary and the contingent with some sort of inclusivity. If the inclusivity, however, is by way of equality, it is suited to be a genus, and then there must be an essential differentia, so the essence is compounded of a genus and differentia. If existence is *not* by way of equality, it does not depart from generality and inclusivity, and then there must still be a differentia which is essential or non-essential, so the essence is compounded of something general and something specific. If Its generality is Its very specificity and Its specificity is Its very generality—there is no generality and specificity at all! Then your proposition proves false: 'we do not doubt that there is existence, and it subdivides into necessary and contingent …' And your positing existence, qua unqualified, as the subject matter of metaphysical science proves false. Moreover, what you mention in the books you have composed proves false, namely 'the concomitants of existence qua existence', and your enumeration of its concomitants qua necessary, not qua existence.

Do you not say: Absence or nonexistence stand opposite It, qua existence, and contingency stands opposite It, qua necessary, not qua existent; Its being one follows for It, qua necessary, and likewise Its being absolutely independent, sanctified above the characteristics of incipience, and Its being an origin for all beings? But his statement 'the multiplicity of negations and relations does not necessitate a multiplicity in the essence' is a proposition which is only uncontested by the commonalty of his companions, and it is *not* apodictic, nor self-evident, nor argued except on the analogy of proximity and distance. And why did he say 'the characterisation of all the relations is the [same as] that of proximity and distance'? If that is conceded

to him, then amongst relations there is that which necessitates the multiplicity of accidents, and amongst them there is that which necessitates the multiplicity of considerations. Is not the characterisation of a man's becoming a father when a son occurs to him, an uncle when the son of a brother occurs to him, and an agent when an act occurs through him, *unlike* the characterisation of proximity and distance? It is likewise on the side of negation. For the negation of the cutting of a sword is unlike the negation of the cutting of wool.

Thus negations are various and relations are various. How then can a single characterisation common to them hold true for them? Rather, the difference *itself* between relational ideas and negational concepts necessitates the multiplicity of two considerations in the essence! For you say: This is a relational concept for it, not a negational one, and this is negational, not relational. You say: 'This is a relation from such and such a point of view, and that from such and such a point of view …', and all that is a relative, mental multiplicity, such that there is understood from each one of them what is not understood from the other, and each term signifies that which is not signified by the other term. So his statement proves false, 'the Necessary of Existence in Itself is not multiple by way of the multiplicity of negations and relations'. We will come back to that in the issue of unity.

The Choice

Our custom is to mention a section at the end of each issue, informing the reader of the cause of error and the mistakes which befell Ibn Sīnā, and pointing out to the student the way of correctness and the truth, through a solid argument which dents the blade and strikes at the joint. And God is the Bestower of success and of help.

I say: These inconsistencies and problems only faced Ibn Sīnā and his associates in philosophy because they made existence general with the generality of genus or the generality of concomitants, and they assumed that since they placed it

amongst the ambiguous and removed it from the univocal they escaped safely from these absurd implications. However, nothing will rescue them from them except treating existence and every attribute and term which they apply to Him (Exalted and Sanctified is He!), such as 'unity', 'the One', 'the Truth', 'the Good', 'the Intellect', 'the Intellecting', 'the Intellected', etcetera, by way of *equivocity*, not univocity, nor ambiguity. They are agreed on the fact that the application of 'unity' and 'the one' to Him (Exalted is He!) and to other than Him is by way of pure equivocity. And likewise is 'the truth' and 'the good'—for He is truth in the sense that He makes the truth true and He makes the false false, and He is necessary in His existence in the sense that He necessitates the existence of other than Him, and annihilates, and He is living in the sense that He gives life and death.

Contraries are litigants and variant things are legal appellants, and their Judge is not numbered amongst either of His two appellants, the two litigants before Him. Instead, 'the truth'[30] is applied to the Judge in the sense that He manifests the truth and establishes it, not in the sense that He disputes with one of the two litigants such that He would sometimes be equal to him and at others at variance with him. So existence and nonexistence, necessity and contingency, unity and multiplicity, knowledge and ignorance, life and death, right and wrong, good and bad, power and impotence, are contraries—and exalted be God above contraries and rivals! 'So do not knowingly make rivals for God.'[31] 'And to God belong the most beautiful names, so call upon Him with them. And spurn those who deviate in respect of His names—they will be punished for what they used to do.'[32] O God, benefit us by that which You teach us, and teach us that by which You benefit us, by the truth of the Chosen Ones amongst Your servants—upon them be peace!

[30] Note that the word for 'the truth', *al-ḥaqq*, also means 'right' in a legal sense.

[31] Qur'an 2:22.

[32] Qur'an 7:180.

THE THIRD ISSUE

On the Unity of the Necessary of Existence

Ibn Sīnā said: 'The Necessary of Existence is not predicated of many, nor can the species of the Necessary of Existence belong to other than Itself. For the existence of Its species as such either is entailed by Its species itself, or is entailed by a cause other than Itself. Then if it is entailed by Its species itself, the existence of Its species belongs only to It and if it is due to a cause, It is an effect.'[33]

Then he said: 'And how can the quiddity abstracted from matter belong to *two* essences? Two things are two only either because of the meaning, or because of the subject bearing the meaning, or because of the position and place, or the moment and time, and in general, due to some *cause* or other. And any two things which do not vary by way of the meaning, only vary by way of something other than the meaning.'[34]

Then he said: 'The Necessary of Existence is one in respect of the perfection of Its existence; and one in respect of the fact that Its definition belongs to It [alone]; and one in respect of the fact that It is not divisible, neither by way of quantity, nor by way of principles constituting It, nor by way of the parts of a definition; and one in respect of the fact that Its rank in existence—namely the *necessity* of existence—only belongs to It, and it is impossible for necessity of existence to be shared.'[35] He set about demonstrating that, and was prolix, and the gist of it amounts to his saying: the necessity of existence would either be amongst the concomitants of a self-subsistent quiddity, or would be amongst the constituents of a quiddity which subsists by way of it, or is an expression for that essence Necessary in Itself, with which absolutely nothing else is associated in necessity of existence—and [the latter] is the truth.

Afterwards he said: 'It could not be said 'two necessaries of existence would *not* be associated in anything'—and how—

[33] Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, p. 229.
[34] Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, pp. 229–30.
[35] Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, p. 230.

seeing that they would be associated in the necessity of existence, and associated in being free of a substrate? If the necessity of existence is predicated of the two by way of equivocity, then our argument is not in regard to the *term* ['Necessary of Existence'] but in regard to the meaning on the basis of which the term is predicated univocally such that a general meaning occurs, with the generality of a concomitant or the generality of a genus—and we have explained the absurdity of that.'[36]

Then he set about proving the Necessary of Existence and he demonstrated it, saying: 'We do not doubt that there is existence. And all existence is either necessary or contingent. If it is necessary, then Its existence has proven true, and that is what is aimed at. If it is contingent, then the existence of every contingent goes back to a necessary … .'[37] And he began to substantiate it by way of the division which he mentioned, and he said afterwards: 'Only one emanates from the One, since were two to emanate from It, then it would be from two variant aspects, and were A to emanate from It from the aspect that B emanated from It, A would be B, and this is absurd. Then, that which emanates from It can have various aspects realised for it, since it is *contingent* of existence in consideration of itself, necessary of existence in consideration of that which necessitates it—so it need not be one in every respect, and then it need not be that only one emanates from it, for it possesses considerations and mental aspects. Then insofar as it is contingent in itself a soul or matter emanates from it, and insofar as it is necessary by another an intellect or form emanates from it.'

Evaluation

The rebuttal of him is in respect to the inconsistency in his discussion and defectiveness in his divisions, not in regard to the verdict of the issue, for monotheism is a verdict upon which there is agreement.

[36] Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, p. 234.
[37] Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, p. 235.

The First Inconsistency. His first statement '"the Necessary of Existence" is not predicated of many', and his statement 'nor can the species of the Necessary of Existence belong to other than Itself'—but 'species' is *only* predicated of many! So how did he apply the term 'species' to the Necessary of Existence? The Necessary of Existence is only predicated of an essence and an existent with which nothing else is associated in name, while species is only predicated of an existent with which something else is associated in name, let alone [in] the description or definition—for they lie above the mere name.

The Second Inconsistency. You took existence qua unqualified and made it the subject of metaphysics, speaking about its concomitants. Next, you placed the Necessary of Existence amongst its divisions and its adjuncts. Then you spoke about the concomitants of the Necessary of Existence qua unqualified, that It is One, that It is Truth, that It is Perfect, that It is a cause, and that It is an origin. Then you spoke in regard to proving the Necessary of Existence and you demonstrated It. Were it not for the fact that you lay necessary existence down as a species, or tantamount to a species, or as something general, or tantamount to something general, you would not mention these differentiae adhering to its status of species. And since Its species does not belong to other than Itself, It has [also] been grasped by Its individuality. Yet the individual, like Zayd, is not sometimes grasped unqualifiedly, so you call attention to its concomitants and adjuncts, and at other times individually, so you call attention to *its* concomitants and adjuncts. For if it is grasped unqualifiedly it departs from being the *individual* Zayd.

The Third Inconsistency. His statement: The Necessary of Existence is one from such and such an aspect, and one from such and such an aspect—and he enumerated seven aspects. I say: He is only one from every aspect if He has no 'aspects' whatsoever. The absolutely one is that which involves no multiplicity, and the multiplicity of these aspects and considerations negates unqualified pure unity. If he says 'This multiplicity

comes down to negations and relations, or to aspects and considerations', we have talked about that sufficiently.

The Fourth Inconsistency. He said: 'It cannot be said "two necessaries of existence would *not* be associated in anything"—and how—[seeing that] they would be associated in existence and the necessity of existence, and being free of a substrate?' This admission of his eliminates all his previous words and contradicts them! It is as though he limits the association which precludes unity and occasions duality to association in meaning through univocity alone, and he does not understand that the association in meaning which is general requires differentiation into the meaning which is particular. That is multiplication and compounding, and it is implied unavoidably.

Then we say: Your statement that 'necessity of existence is not predicated of many, nor can the species of the Necessary of Existence belong to other than Itself' contradicts your statement 'existence is predicated of many, and the species of existence can belong to other than itself, and despite that the existence of the Necessary by Itself belongs to nothing other than Itself'. Then why do you not say of the Necessary 'It is predicated of many, and despite that the existence of the Necessary by Itself belongs to nothing other than Itself'? Except that you have explicitly spoken of many!

I say: Amongst substances is that which is distinguished by itself and its reality from the like of it and the opposite of it, without being associated in a genus and differentiated by a differentia, such as the separate intellects, for they do not have something they are associated in, like genus or like matter, nor something through which they are distinguished, like differentia or like form. Despite that they are variant in their realities and distinct in their forms by themselves and nothing else. So why do you not say likewise in regard to two necessaries of existence?

In regard to his statement 'The existence of Its species either is entailed by Its species itself, or is entailed by a cause other than Itself,' it may be said: 'For what would you reproach someone who says "the existence of Its species is not to be

supplied with a cause at all, neither by way of the species itself, nor by way of some cause other than itself"—so that the division is useless?' The second division: 'Two things are two only either due to a meaning, or a cause which is the subject bearing the meaning, or due to such and such', is not a comprehensive division. And in his statement 'The Necessary of Existence is one in respect of the perfection of Its existence', he did not explain 'perfection' and did not understand that 'perfection' is a deficiency for Him. One of the sages has said: 'The greatest self-sufficiency is His to whom the creation and the Command belong'—Majestic is our Lord and exalted above being characterised by perfection, *a fortiori* of being characterised by deficiency! For He makes perfect whatever is perfect and makes complete whatever is deficient. Then if Ibn Sīnā meant by 'perfection' that He perfects everything perfect, that is true. However, he is obliged to follow this proposition through for every attribute, even for existence, so that he says: He is 'existent' in the sense that He existentialises every existence, is 'Necessary of Existence' in the sense that He necessitates every existent, is 'knowing' in the sense that He causes whatever is knowing to know, and is 'powerful' in the sense that He empowers whatever is powerful. Yet that is not the man's procedure. Were that the doctrine he espoused he would not have upheld the universality and inclusivity of existence, and he would have judged that existence is amongst purely equivocal terms, as we explained above.

What Ibn Sīnā mentioned—that He is one in respect of the fact that His definition belongs to Him [alone] and one in respect of the fact that He is indivisible—all that is onenesses belonging to each single one of His creatures (Exalted is He!), and their negation from Him and their affirmation for Him is a deficiency. Likewise is his statement 'The necessity of existence is either amongst the concomitants of a quiddity or amongst its constituents', but He has no quiddity such that it could have a concomitant or a constituent. And were He to have a quiddity, either it would be different from existence or it would be existence itself. Both disjuncts are false, for either

the quiddity is an associated quiddity like 'animality' for man, horse and donkey, or it is a particular quiddity like 'man'. But there is neither association in the existence of the Necessary of Existence nor particularity.[38] Then why is it that the man uses the term 'quiddity' and 'species-status' on every occasion, while in reality disbelieving it?[39] How—when he does not even affirm quiddities compounded of genera and differentiae for separate intellects, but mentions that they are distinguished by their simple non-compound realities? So how, by mention of quiddity and species-status, did he make as if to affirm the ideas of genus and differentia in respect of the Necessary of Existence?

What he mentioned by way of proof—that It is the support for contingents—is correct, unobjectionable and incontestable, except that he confused the onlooker by mentioning divisions from which It is free, intending to illuminate and explain thereby, but increasing muddle and mystification thereby. And knowledge is a modicum which is added to by the foolish!

In regard to his statement 'only one emanates from the One', it is to be said to him: what is meant by 'emanation' from It? Do you mean existentiation by 'emanation' or do you mean necessitation by it? For existentiation is the bestowal of existence and necessitation is the bestowal of necessity, and the contingent in itself only needs the Necessary in Itself in acquiring *existence*, not necessity. Necessity implies existence and existence does not imply necessity. We will come back to prove this in the issue on the incipience of the world. What he mentioned about the emanation of two different acts only being by way of two different aspects, is a *petitio principii*, only sheer rejection of the counter-thesis and simply ruling it out as fanciful remaining for him. We can establish that in physics,

[38] Up to here, al-Shahrastānī has paraphrased Ibn Sīnā's proof for divine unity. Compare *Ishārāt*, vol. 3, pp. 464–9.

[39] Perhaps al-Shahrastānī has in mind here Ibn Sīnā's formula, 'His quiddity is His quoddity' (*māhiyyatuhu hiya inniyyatuhu*). In regard to species, al-Shahrastānī began the chapter by quoting Ibn Sīnā, '… nor can the species of the Necessary of Existence belong to other than Itself'.

since heat and cold might emanate from a single thing from a single aspect, however, *into two different substances*. Likewise, whiteness and blackness emanate from the sun into two material substrata, and solidity and liquefaction into two bodies—so what about into intellectual substances?

Next, the like of these aspects do *not* necessitate multiplicity in the essence of the Necessary of Existence. He has admitted the proof of that in different places, reducing them [=the aspects] to negations and relations, and that does not necessitate multiplicity in the essence. He admits the like of that in regard to the First Intellect, for one existent among other existents has emanated from it by each aspect and relation. Next, if only one emanates from the One then it is implied that only two emanate from the two! So if three, or four, or more emanated from it, it would be from different aspects—yet two aspects, not more, have been presupposed for it. Thus the ascription of what is more than two to two aspects is just like the ascription of what is more than one to a single aspect. And the ascription of ten to five is just like the ascription of two to one.

Ibn Sīnā said in the *Najāt* in reply to the like of these absurd implications: 'The First Effect is contingent of existence in itself and necessary of existence through the First; and the necessity of its existence through the First is an intellect, and it intellects its own essence and intellects the First …' until he says, 'what it has in itself is contingency of existence and what it has from the First is necessity of existence. Then the multiplicity insofar as it intellects its own essence *and* intellects the First, is a multiplicity which is a concomitant of the necessity of its existence from the First. So the multiplicity of these considerations, subsequent to it being contingent of existence in itself, does not have an effect on what it has in itself. This is in contrast to the situation with the Necessary of Existence, for multiplicity *would* have an effect on what It has in Itself, namely unity, in that It is Necessary of Existence.'[40]

I say: Certainly, what it has in consideration of itself is

[40] Compare Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, p. 277.

contingency of existence, and contingency of existence is different from *existence*, so it has a 'non-existential' nature. Nonexistence does not existentialise something existent, so no existence is necessitated by it! On the other hand, the necessity of existence which it has is non-essential, but rather is a concomitant—and the concomitant does not bring into existence an essence as an intended existent. So in consequence the intellect does not have what is conducive to emanation from it and existentiation by it. Likewise every contingent has this characterisation, and so there is no existentialiser for beings other than God (Exalted is He!), the Necessary of Existence in Himself. Thus it is necessary for all contingents to be related to Him in the same way, without the mediation of an intellect, a soul and a nature. As for its being an 'intellect', it is a term for its abstraction from matter. Abstraction from matter is simply the negation of matter from it, and how can unqualified negation, or the particular negation of a thing from it be suitable for an intellectual substance which is among the noblest of existents? Therefore, there is no aspect in the intellect conducive to necessitation and origination, and so it is necessary that the universe is directly related to the Necessary of Existence in Itself.

Ibn Sīnā said: 'Contingency has a non-existential nature, so it is conducive to that which has a non-existential nature, namely, matter. And necessity has an existential nature, so it is conducive to that which has an existential nature, namely, form. Inasmuch as it intellects itself in abstraction from matter, it is conducive to an intellect abstracted from matter, or universal soul; also inasmuch as it intellects the First, it is conducive to separate intellects and ruling souls. Then these kinds of conduciveness are not limited by a known number, for the intellect does not determine the limitation of their numbers within a known number. However, astronomical observation has shown that there are nine spheres, and the proof has been established that every sphere has a soul, and every soul an intellect. Thus there are nine separate intellects and nine souls.'

I say: You toil away, you assemblies of philosophers, at

deducing the likes of these tenuous ideas with which even a jurist would not be satisfied in the guesswork of his conjectures, and to which he would not tie any verdict in matters of law—how then the sage who speaks on the highest of sciences, in matters of divinity? Is not 'contingency' a judgement covering all contingents? So if the First Intellect in consideration of its contingency is an originator of matter which has a non-existential nature, then the status of every contingent existent in respect of contingency is the status of the First Intellect, so let it be suited to be an originator of matter! And if the First Intellect in consideration of the necessity of its existence by way of the First is an originator of form which has an existential nature, then every existent which is necessary by another has the same status in respect of 'necessity by the other' as the First Intellect, so let it be suited to be an originator of form! But that is not the case. If the state of affairs were reversed in regard to the hierarchy of beings, such that the First Intellect were last and the compound body first, the situation would not be as far-fetched as he supposed. For the body is multiple simply through form and matter, while the intellect is multiple through necessity and contingency. So form is like necessity and matter is like contingency. And if something can emanate from the Necessary which is contingent in itself and necessary by It, something could also emanate from It which is a matter and a form, without the Necessary being multiplied thereby, just as It is not multiplied by the former.

We say: If the First Intellect were in respect of its contingency to necessitate matter, and in respect of its necessity to necessitate form, then the existent which is after the First Intellect would be a body compounded of matter and form, and the [other] separate intellects would be after *it* in existence. But this contradicts what they set forth in their books regarding the hierarchy of existents.

Sometimes Ibn Sīnā says in some of his *Ta'līqāt*, 'insofar as the First Intellect intellects its own essence a soul emanates from it, and insofar as it intellects the First an intellect emanates from it'; and sometimes he says in some of his works, 'some

forty intellects emanate from Him, which are the "separate intellects"'. His discussion has gone astray in the extreme in this instance. For he was unable to introduce this on the basis of a sound demonstration and a 'straight path'—and whoever takes up knowledge of what is beyond him is stricken by ignorance of what is below it!

We say: If the like of these aspects and considerations which are in the First Intellect were simultaneously to necessitate intellectual existents which are multiple in their identities, without necessitating a multiplicity in the essence of the [First] Intellect, then, intellectual existents which are multiple in their identities can simultaneously emanate from the *Necessary of Existence* via the like of these aspects and considerations, without necessitating a multiplicity in the essence of the Necessary of Existence. So it could be said: 'Insofar as It intellects Itself an intellect emanates from It, and insofar as Its existence is necessary a soul is emitted from It, and insofar as it intellects the First Intellect either a form emanates from It, or a matter and a form …', and so on by way of arbitrary rulings. For one aspect is indistinguishable from another and one consideration from another.

From another point of view: Since the Necessary of Existence is one from every aspect, and It necessitates a single Intellect from an 'aspect', then let the Intellect also necessitate a single thing from an aspect. For it only necessitates something in consideration of its benefiting from that which necessitates *it*, not in consideration of what it has in itself, so that it follows that existence is arranged from individuals in a continuous sequence, not in unequal quantities and variant individuals. But existence is the opposite of that, so it is incoherent.

From another point of view: Just as many cannot emanate from one, because it would necessitate a multiplicity in the cause, likewise one cannot emanate from one, because it would necessitate a unity in the effect![41] And if it were said 'the

[41] Ibn Sīnā denies that the First Effect is absolutely one in the

multiplicity in the effect is not derived from the cause, but is in consideration of itself—that it is contingent, necessary by another', it may be said: and multiplicity in the *cause* is not in consideration of Its essence but is in consideration of 'relation and negation', and the multiplicity of relations does not necessitate multiplicity in the essence.

And from another point of view we say: Were the Necessary of Existence to intellect two things, it does not follow that it is through two different 'aspects'. Then why, when He originates two things, must it be through two different aspects? Is not His intellection the same as His origination from the point of view of the man, without any difference between [the statements] 'He intellected' and 'He originated'? So if He can intellect two universals He can *originate* two universals. Unless he would cling to this blasphemous innovation and say 'He only intellects one thing, just as He only originates one thing …'. Thus he would abandon his doctrine that [God] knows things in respect of their universals and their causes. And in that case it would follow for him that He only knows Himself—and that is most blasphemous!

And here is a point of inquiry, namely, in what sense is unity predicated of the Necessary in Itself, of the Intellect, of the Soul and of the rest of the existents? Is it by way of univocity, by way of ambiguity, or by way of equivocity? If it is by way of univocity, allow it to be suited to be a genus, and allow every species to be differentiated by a differentia—and that is composition. If it is by way of ambiguity, allow it to be suited to be something general, and allow every species to be differentiated by a concomitant property—and that too is a composition. If it is by way of equivocity, let him distinguish through essential realities between one unity and another, for two things associated within the term ['unity'] vary through essential concomitant realities and meanings. If the distinction is not evident, the discussion about the unity of the Creator (Praised be He!)

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manner of the Necessary of Existence. It already involves a relative multiplicity.

is empty talk. So let us make that evident, and mention the divisions of unity such that when we say 'He (Exalted is He!) is one, but not like numerically single things' the unity is unadulterated and absolute. And let us mention the usual section at the ends of the issues, and 'If your neighbours fail you, rely on the master of your house!' May God (Mighty and Majestic!) grant us protection from error and stumbling.

The Correct Choice

Since the starting point of the demonstration establishing the Necessary of Existence in Itself is the division of existence into 'necessary in itself' and 'contingent in itself', and it has become clear that existence belongs to equivocal, not univocal terms, and it has become apparent that the ambiguous is tantamount to the univocal or is a division without meaning—the method of demonstration for Ibn Sīnā and whoever follows him comes apart, because division does not apply to the equivocal. On the other hand, the procedure of the prophets (upon them be peace!) is in accordance with what we will report. So we say: the Creator (Exalted is He!) is too well known for His existence to be pointed to by anything, and the recognition of Him (Exalted is He!) is through innate predisposition. Whoever denies Him has denied himself. Nay! Whoever denies Him has [actually] *confirmed* Him, since He is the absolute Judge. And whoever avers that there is no Judge has made a judgement. So the denial of Him is a confirmation and the negation of Him is an affirmation.

Just as the contingency in all contingents is something essential and the need of the contingent for a preponderator is something necessary, and so it calls for something needed which is *not* contingent, i.e. not in need of other than it—likewise incongruent things when paired and paired things when combined need something absolutely independent to combine them. However, the [status of being] 'absolutely independent' cannot be realised for two since each of the two would be in need as well as needed, in *being two*. So the absolutely

independent is the Lord Besought of All, for 'He is God, the One, the Lord Besought of All', and that is mentioned in the 'Sūra of Sincerity'.[42] In accordance with this the starting-point of the summons of the prophets (peace be upon them!) was monotheism, I mean the statement 'No god but God', since the affirmation [of God's existence] was already finished with. Because of this the denial by opponents is confined to monotheism alone: 'This is because when God alone was invoked, you disbelieved';[43] 'When God alone is mentioned, the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter recoil';[44] 'When you mention your Lord in [reciting] the Qur'an, alone, they turn their backs in aversion'.[45] So it is clear that the summons at first was to monotheism, since there is [in fact] no one in the world who denies a creative and wise 'god'. Denial is in regard to monotheism alone, and the proof of monotheism is what we have mentioned amongst the Names in the 'Sūra of Sincerity'.

Next, unity is in accordance with divisions: (1) A unity which is the source and basis of number. As we say, 'one, two …', number being composed from it, and as the number increases, the relation of one to it diminishes. Unity in this sense is unworthy of the majesty of God (Exalted is He!), since it is not possible for number and the numerable to be composed from Him. (2) A unity which is concomitant to number and the numerable. As we say of every totality, 'it is one', for ten insofar as it is 'ten' is a single totality. And as we say 'one man', 'one horse', 'one inscription'. This unity too is unworthy of the majesty of God (Exalted is He!), since He is not a totality[46] such that the unity of a totality is realised for Him. (3) Like that is the unity of species, the unity of genus, and the unity of the individual which are indicated perceptually and intellectually. Instead, 'unity' is applied to Him (Exalted is He!) and to

[42] Qur'an 112: 1–2.
[43] Qur'an 40:12.
[44] Qur'an 39:45.
[45] Qur'an 17:46.
[46] *Jumla* also suggests 'collection'.

existents purely equivocally. He is one *unlike* the 'ones' mentioned—one such that the two opposites, unity and multiplicity, both emanate from Him, one in the sense that He brings things that are 'one' into existence. He was unique in unicity, then He made it overflow on His creation. Unity and existence belong to Him without an opposite opposing Him or a rival comparing with Him, 'And do not knowingly set up rivals to God!'[47]

As for His origination of beings multiply or His origination of the Intellect singly, since He is single—the absurd implication of both doctrines together has been mentioned. For the existence of a multiplicity through Him and its emanation from Him, necessitates a plurality of aspects and considerations in His essence (Exalted is He!); while the existence of one through one either entails a correlation between the cause and effect, or it entails the oneness in every way of the effect. Both alternatives are false. Rather both alternatives are also correct! For the generality and particularity of the relation is mentioned in the revelation and is accepted by people of intellect. God (Exalted is He!) says, 'There is not one thing in the heavens and the earth but it comes to God as a worshipper'.[48] This is due to the generality of the relation with Him. And He says (the mention of Him is glorious!), 'And the worshippers of the All-Merciful are those who walk gently on the earth'.[49] This is due to the particularity of the relation with Him.

The general can be particularised step by step till it reaches a limit in a single thing which is a 'worshipper', just as the particular can be generalised step by step till it reaches a limit in 'the universe'. The uppermost worshippers of God are His angels 'brought nigh'. The status of the Spirit which rises as a rank, and the angels as a rank,[50] is the status of the universe in company with its parts, or the First Active Intellect in company

[47] Qur'an 2:22.

[48] Qur'an 19:93.

[49] Qur'an 25:63.

[50] This alludes to Qur'an 78:38: 'On a day when the Spirit and the angels stand as a rank …'

with the separate intellects which direct by the Command. And just as particularity and generality are two things both rational and revealed in regard to 'worship', likewise their status occurs in regard to origination and creation, and in the relation of Lordship to the worshippers as His statement (Exalted is He!): 'the Lord of the worlds, the Lord of Moses and Aaron'.[51]

Furthermore, know that what is mentioned in the divine scriptures, in respect of the generality and particularity of relation, is more worthy of being followed than the proposition of the philosophers, 'only one emanates from the One, and the rest of the existents are related to It by the mediation of that one, in the manner of concomitance'. For the *relation* of that one to It also—if one looks into *its* reality—is in the manner of concomitance, since the existence of that one through It is amongst the concomitants of Its essence. What then is the difference between the two divisions? Why might not the universe be related to It in a single manner without any difference between what emanates from It essentially, without mediation and by primary intention, not by secondary intention, and between what emanates from It contrary to that? The secret of it is that the aspect through which contingents are in need of the Originator is their contingent existence, and existents are equal in regard to this aspect. So there is no difference between what is abstracted from matter and what is associated with matter from the point of view of contingency, nor in respect of contingent existence, and the two divisions are only disparate in rank for *another reason*. So it is appropriate that the First Principle is a principle for everything in a single manner, and the 'intermediaries' are different due to the disparity of levels.

Does not the Intellect, the Dispenser of Forms, emit forms onto the various matters by a single emission, and its essence is not multiplied by their multiplicity, and the relation of them all to it is a single relation, so it is not said: insofar as whiteness emanates from it on a matter, and blackness on a matter, two facets and aspects are incepted for it such that its essence is

[51] Qur'an 7:121–122; 26:48.

multiplied by the multiplicity of the forms which are infinite? The statement about the Necessary of Existence in Itself is like that. If it were said: 'The Active Intellect possesses multiple aspects and considerations, since it is contingent in itself, necessary through that which necessitates it, and it intellects its essence, its cause, and its effect in addition to other aspects of multiplicity—in contrast to the Necessary of Existence in Itself, for *It* is one from every aspect', it may be said: This excuse does not counter the vital aspect of the argument. For were the multiplicity of what emanates to bring about a multiplicity in the essence of the source, then the aspects would be as numerous as the number of what emanates from it, and these aspects would be realised in the essence without limit. We do not doubt that the essence of the Dispenser of Forms does not contain numbers of facets *without limit!* Since there are limited facets in its essence, do there not emanate from the First Intellect limited existents, like the separate intellects and the souls directing the spheres; or else they are limited to three aspects, so three things arise from it: an intellect, a soul, and a matter, in accordance with the divergence in doctrines on this question?

In sum, it is known from that, that the relation of the universe to the Necessary of Existence is in accordance with a single judgement, in which the one and the many, substance and accident, and that which is abstracted from matter and that which is associated with it, are all equal: 'And He is powerful over everything …!'[52] O God, benefit us by that which You teach us, and teach us that by which You benefit us, by the truth of the Chosen Ones amongst Your servants—upon them be peace!

[52] Qur'an 64:1.

THE FOURTH ISSUE

On the Knowledge of the Necessary of Existence and Its Relationship With the Universal and Particular

Know that the theologians have affirmed that the Creator (Exalted is He!) knows all objects of knowledge, by their method of examining His acts and [the latter's] implication of precision and skill. They claim apodictic knowledge that [for] every precise and skilful act when it is derived from an agent, it must be that its agent is knowledgeable about it in every way. However, this judgement broke down for some of them, since they found agents in empirical experience from which an act is derived in every way, yet its agent does *not* know it in every way.

The philosophers eschew this method, for some of the ancients amongst them held that knowledge is the form of the object of knowledge with the knower, and it is absurd that the First have an essence *and* a form in the essence—for He would either be together with a form, or a possessor of form, and He is exalted above that. Rather this is the description of the First Intellect, since the forms of existents are present with it and inscribed upon it.

Ibn Sīnā said: 'The Necessary of Existence in Itself is an intellect, intellecting and intellected, and It is one in Its essence, not multiplied thereby. As for [the fact] that It is intellected—it is because you know that the nature of existence qua nature of existence is not incapable of being intellected. It only happens accidentally to it not to be intellected when it is in matter and with the accidents of matter, and insofar as it is like that, it is an object of sense perception or of imagination. When existence is in abstraction from this restraining condition, it is existence *and* an intellected quiddity. Everything which in itself is in abstraction from matter and material accidents, insofar as it is abstract, it is an intellect; insofar as it is considered for it that its abstract identity belongs to itself, it is self-intellected; and insofar as it is considered for it that its self has an abstract identity, it is self-intellecting.'[53]

[53] Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, pp. 243–4. Also see *al-Shifā'*: *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, ed.

Then he said after that: 'Its being intellected and intellecting *ipso facto* does not necessitate that It is twofold in Itself, nor even twofold in consideration. For the two things are brought about only in that (1) It has an abstract quiddity, [which is] Itself, and (2) Its abstract quiddity belongs to It. So Its being intellecting and intellected does not necessitate multiplicity at all.'[54]

Then he said: 'He is the origin of every existence, so He intellects from Himself that for which He is an origin. He is an origin for the existents which are perfect in themselves, and for the existents which are generable and corruptible, in the first place in their species and by means of that their individuals. It cannot be that He intellects these changeable things together with their change. Instead He intellects each thing in a universal way. No particular thing escapes His notice, and His essence does not change through change in the object of knowledge.'[55]

He further said: 'It cannot be that He knows things through the things themselves,[56] or else His knowledge would be passive. Instead things are known through *Him* and emanate from *Him*. For He cannot bear the trace of anything of what is known by Him or effectuated by Him. Rather, the form of existence is traced on *them* after contingency of existence belonged to them. For the contingency which belongs to all the contingents is as it were their matter, and existence is as it were the form. And the Necessary of Existence is devoid of the nature of contingency and of non-existence, which are the sources of evil.'

Ibrāhīm Madkūr et al. (Cairo, 1960), p. 357.

54 Compare Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, p. 245.

55 Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, pp. 246–7.

56 Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, p. 246.

The Rebuttal of Him by the Inconsistency in His Discussion and the Refutation of His Objective and Aim

The First Inconsistency. His statement: 'Insofar as it is considered that It is abstract It is an intellect, and insofar as it is considered that It is, etc., etc. …' and he has stipulated three considerations so that he affirmed that It is an intellect, intellecting and intellected. Then he said afterwards that that does *not* necessitate that It is twofold in consideration. So how is it that the last part of his discussion contradicts the first?

The Second Inconsistency. He said: 'He is the origin of every existence, so He intellects from Himself that for which He is an origin.' This gives notice that He originates, *then* He intellects. And after that he said: His intellection and knowledge are active not passive. This gives notice that He intellects, *then* He originates. And he said in some other passage in the *Shifā'*: His intellection is His very origination and His origination is His very intellection—so the duality between the intellection and origination is removed. This in wording and sense is a clear inconsistency.

The Third Inconsistency. His statement 'He is the origin of every existence, so He intellects from Himself that for which He is an origin', and his statement 'He intellects Himself by Himself insofar as it is considered for Him that He has an abstract identity'—and he has glossed intellection in one passage as origination, which is a positive entity, and he has glossed intellection in another passage as abstraction, which is a negative entity. This is a dumbfounding incoherence.

As for Refuting Him and Imposing Absurd Implications Upon Him

I say: You stipulated three considerations in the essence of the Necessary of Existence and glossed each consideration with a proper meaning, each of which is not to be understood from the other. That is patent Trinitarianism, and exalted be God above being the third of three! This is not a slander, but the

absurd implication of multiplicity in His essence in respect of one consideration and another, just as it attaches to the Christians in respect of one hypostasis and another.

His excuse for multiplicity in consideration, that it does not necessitate two in the essence, is of no avail to him. For the thing through which his excuse is correct such that it negates the two—namely, that the *result* of the two things is that (1) It has an abstract quiddity which is Itself, and that (2) Its abstract quiddity belongs to It—removes the very thing through which there would be a multiplicity of considerations in Its essence [in the first place]. So why is it that he posits them as three considerations and then removes them by this interpretation, just as the Christians lay down the Trinity in divine hypostases, and remove it by way of unification in substantiality, saying 'One in substantiality, Three in hypostases …'?

In this 'clarification' Ibn Sīnā only added one problem on top of another. For he incorporated the term 'quiddity' in it, so he made out that It has an existence *and* the quiddity of an existence which must be abstract in itself, and its abstraction is its intellection, and its intellection is its [act of] origination. Then if existence, quiddity, abstraction, intellection and origination are synonymous expressions, allow that one of them may stand in the place of another, so that it is said: the abstraction is an intellection and the intellection is an origination, therefore the abstraction is an origination.[57] While if the expressions are distinct, allow that each expression signifies an idea which the other expression does not signify—and that is multiplicity! I say immediately: You are required on the part of some of your companions to establish that the Necessary of Existence is knowing and intellecting, known and intellected. But you did not begin the demonstration of it except by your saying 'It is intelligible of quiddity, for the nature of existence and its subdivisions are not incapable of being intellected'. This is a *petitio principii*, for controversy occurs over it and opposition to it persists.

[57] Via hypothetical syllogism.

Those companions *deny* that It is intellected and that It intellects. For intellection is the inscribing of the intellect by the form of the intellected—and the Real is exalted above having form and so being intellected, equally whether the form is corporeal or an incorporeal quiddity. Also He is exalted above intellecting, such that there is both He *and* a form. Rather, He is beyond knowing and being known! And you, you began the proof with the fact that He is knowable in order to establish that He knows, and they objected to you about the more obvious. How then do you argue against them proceeding from the more *obscure* to the more obvious?

Then leave their discourse behind Mount Qāf and return to that which is satisfactory and appropriate![58] You have taken 'existence' by way of generality and univocity as a subject, and have given it a general characterisation as a predicate. But someone who says 'existence applies to the Necessary of Existence and to other than It by way of equivocity, or ambiguity which is tantamount to equivocity', does not concede the generality of this characterisation. This is like someone who characterises '*ayn* as 'eye'—the generalisation of the characterisation to include the disc of the sun is not conceded to him. And you, though you believe in a kind of generality for existence, you have excluded it in the case of the Necessary of Existence from the rest of existents, with an exclusion more extreme in dissimilarity than the eye and the disc of the sun. So why do you deny that the generality of this characterisation is *not* general for It as for the rest of the existents?

And another thing, namely, that you undertook to prove that It intellects and you embarked on the explanation that it is not impossible that It be intellected. But if it is *not impossible*, it does not become *necessary* that it be intellected as long as no further proof is linked with it. And if it is necessary that It be intellected, it does not follow from that that It intellects. Thus there must be another argument—but we have not heard any

[58] The mythical Qāf mountain was believed to surround the world. See 'Ḳāf', EI2, vol. 4, p. 400.

argument from you other than your proposition, 'It only happens accidentally to it not to be intellected, when it is in matter'. It may be said: What impedes is not limited to presence in matter, but sometimes there may be another impediment. For just as the perceptible is not inscribed on the intellect, qua perceptible, i.e. being in matter, likewise the intelligible is not inscribed on sense perception, qua intelligible, i.e. *not* being in matter![59] Yet He Whose majesty is exalted above being inscribed by anything is also exalted above anything being inscribed by *Him*. And just as something may be imperceptible by force of its hiddenness, likewise it may be imperceptible by force of its obviousness. So the obstacle is not matter or the adjuncts of matter, and his statement proves false: 'The nature of existence qua existent is not incapable of being intellected'. Also the limitation of the obstacles to matter and its adjuncts proves false, and the search reverts anew, and the contest goes on between you and your companions till you come to the universal and the particular.

Perhaps those people persevere in that they say: If He had knowledge, it would not be free of one of two things—either it would be universal or particular. If it were universal, it could not be conceived to be efficient, for that which is brought into being by the universal must *be* universal, just as that which is brought into being by particular knowledge must be particular. Yet there is no universal in individuals at all. So that which occurs through it would not occur in the manner it was produced, and that through which it was produced would not be in the manner it occurs. Then if His knowledge were particular, it would have to be changed by change in the object of knowledge, for the knowledge that Zayd *will* arrive does not remain with the knowledge that he *has* arrived. What is the reply to this problem?

As for us, we say: Concerning your statement that the First qua abstracted from matter is an intellect—abstraction from matter is like affirming transcendence over corporeity and like

[59] Here, the impediment is precisely immateriality.

sublimation above the characteristics of substances and accidents. So why do you say 'when it is not in a matter it must be an intellect, i.e. knowledge and knowing'? And this is because abstraction from matter is a negative attribute, and why should the negation of matter from something necessitate its being knowledge or knowing, an intellect or intellecting? Like the negation of whatever is inappropriate for His majesty, it does not necessitate the *affirmation* of His being Knowing.

Then we say: You affirmed multiple considerations in the Necessary in Itself by His being an intellect, intellecting and intellected, and you affirmed multiple considerations in the First Intellect by its being contingent in itself, necessary by another. It is also an 'intellect' because it is abstracted from matter, and intellecting and intellected by itself since its intellect-status belongs to it essentially and its quiddity does not belong to it through other than it, for what it acquires through other than it is its existence not its quiddity. So if these considerations do not necessitate a multiplicity in the essence of the Necessary of Existence, why do they necessitate multiplicity in the First Intellect—one negation being like another and one relation like another? But if they necessitate multiplicity in the First Intellect, allow that multiplicity is necessitated in the Necessary of Existence. It follows from that, that the multiple individuals may be directly ascribed to the Necessary of Existence through origination and direct production[60] without their emanation from It necessitating a multiplicity, or else they may not be ascribed to the First Intellect just as they may not be ascribed to the Necessary of Existence. This is something to which there is absolutely no reply!

As for his statement 'He is the origin of every existent, so He intellects from Himself that for which He is an origin'—the question about this is: does He intellect then originate, or originate then intellect, or intellect and originate together, or is

[60] *Ibdāʿ* (origination or 'instauration') and *ikhtirāʿ* (direct production) both suggest absolute *creatio ex nihilo*, as against *khalq*, which here means creation of an indirect and qualified kind.

His intellection an origination and His origination an intellection? If he says He intellects then originates, it follows that what is originated is a thing or is the virtuality of a thing such that He originates it, and He is exalted above anything, or the virtuality of anything, being *with* Him! If he says He originates then intellects, it follows that His intellection would be passive, not active. If he says He intellects and originates together, then He does not originate what He intellects and He does not intellect what He originates, and his statement proves false: 'so He intellects from Himself that for which He is an origin'. And if he says His intellection is His origination and His origination is His intellection (and this is the doctrine espoused by the man) various things follow from it, amongst which is that, if the intellection and origination are synonymous, let him say 'He originated Himself', in the sense that He *intellects* Himself! And amongst them is that the intellection may be universal and it may be particular. So let him say 'origination may be universal and it may be particular'. And amongst them is that it invalidates his statement 'He is the origin of every existence, so He intellects from Himself that for which He is an origin', for the implication of it will be 'He intellects every existent, so He intellects that which He is intellecting', and this is an incoherence. Amongst them is also that it invalidates his statement 'He intellects perfect existents in themselves, and generable and corruptible ones through their species and by means of that their individuals'. For the particular 'selves' and individuals are originated, but as for the species, they are intellected and not originated. So were intellection and origination synonymous such that one may take the place of the other, the species qua species would be *originated* in a universal manner, insofar as they are intellected in a universal manner—but that is not the doctrine espoused by the man.

Then he said 'It cannot be that He intellects these changeable things together with their change …' It is to be said: If He can be an origin for perfect existents in themselves, without being multiplied by their multiplicity, then He can intellect changeable things without changing through their change.

Notwithstanding the fact that the doctrine espoused by the man contradicts what he mentions. For according to him He is *not* an origin for perfect existents in themselves together except by the mediation of the First Intellect. So He is an origin for a single thing, and is intellecting a single thing, and by *its* mediation originating and intellecting perfect existents in themselves. Species and individuals are also like that, for He intellects the species and by mediation He intellects individuals. Thus the relation of the perfect existents—which are the separate substances—to the First Intellect, is like the relation of the individuals to the species. However, the species cannot exist in its status of species, and then the individuals exist, but it can be *intellected* in its status of species, and then the individuals are intellected. This is a clear difference between origination and intellection.

In regard to his statement 'Instead He intellects each thing in a universal way and no particular thing escapes His notice …', I say: since he understood that the knowledge of particulars changes through change in the particulars, and the knowledge of generable and corruptible things is like that, he tried to escape that through running away to the affirmation of the knowledge of universals, particulars then being subsumed under universals by necessary implication and derivation. An example of that is that the knowledge that an individual eclipse will happen at a specific time is not knowledge of what comes to be at the time of the eclipse, nor of what has occurred as an eclipse in the past. Thus it is inevitable that the knowledge changes with the change of the object of knowledge or that there be another knowledge, other than the first knowledge. However, the knowledge that when the moon is in such and such a zodiacal house and the sun is in opposition to it in such and such a house, together with the rest of the causes which make the eclipse necessary, then there must be an eclipse, is 'universal' and unchanging knowledge, and is before the eclipse, during the eclipse and after it in a single manner. So Ibn Sīnā thought that through the like of this example he could

escape the absurd implication of changeability. Yet there is no escape, 'it is no longer the moment to flee!'[61]

Let the High Council ponder the absurd implications closely which I present against him, and the claims with which I throttle him, so it understands that all that he depended on are merely plausible claims, not apodictic ones. And plausible propositions do not yield certainty. So I say: you are confronted by the demand to prove that He (Exalted is He!) is knowing, *not* by the method of the speculative theologian, for he infers it from precision and skill in particulars. But you, you do not say 'He knows particulars' except derivatively and by necessary implication, and that is not fit for making the inference from. For in the case of someone who stamps an inscribed seal on wax so that the inscription appears on it, the knowledge of the one who does the stamping is not to be deduced from the beauty of the inscription. Perhaps he does not know the inscription. Instead the inscription has come about through him by necessary implication and derivatively, due to the impression. The one who inscribes is different from the one who stamps, so you are still in the position of being questioned as to *your* method.

We move on from it in the explanation a little, and say: you grant that He is knowing, i.e. an intellect and intellecting, and you say 'you are right'. So we say: Yes, but why do you say 'knowledge is in two ways, universal and particular, and since it cannot be particular it must be universal'? Why do you reprove someone who affirms a kind of knowledge beyond the two divisions? This is like someone saying 'knowledge is either conception or assent', so it is replied: The knowledge of the Necessary of Existence is *neither* conception nor assent. Or else it is said 'knowledge is primary or acquired', so it is replied: With what do you reprove someone who affirms a kind of knowledge neither primary nor acquired? It would be enough for me for the verdict of reason to establish the just claim without giving any example. But I mention the exemplification to safeguard against being blamed for disputation and wrangling.

[61] See Qur'an 38:3.

On the other hand, I move on from it a little and say: Were change in the object of knowledge to necessitate change in the knowledge, then the multiplication of the object of knowledge would necessitate the multiplication of the knowledge. So it would follow that the essence is multiplied by the multiplication of the objects of knowledge, or else the object of His knowledge would become single, so that He would only know one object of knowledge, just as He only originates one intellect; and by its mediation He would know the rest of the objects of knowledge on the basis of concomitance and derivation, just as by its mediation He originates the rest of the existents on the basis of concomitance and derivation. In accordance with this consideration the ruling that He knows universals collapses. Instead He essentially only knows one object of knowledge!

If the existence of the First Intellect is amongst the concomitants of His existence in Himself, and of His intellection of Himself, He is in Himself intellecting Himself alone. The First Effect thus comes to be amongst the concomitants of God in respect of knowledge, just as it is amongst His concomitants in respect of existence—so He only knows Himself alone. See how the rank of knowledge climbs from the particular to the universal, then to the First Intellect, then to the essence of the Necessary of Existence. This is exactly the doctrine of the ancient philosophers: that the First intellects Himself by Himself alone, and He only intellects the First Intellect and the existents subsequent to it *through concomitance*. So He does not intellect universals qua universals, since He would be multiplied by their multiplicity, nor particulars qua particulars since He would be changed by their change. His knowledge is too exalted to be universal or particular, or for Him to know other than His most exalted essence through it.

As for Ibn Sīnā's statement 'It cannot be that He knows things through the things themselves, or else His knowledge would be passive', I say: this issue is between them and the speculative theologians, whether He knows things prior to their coming to be, or with their coming to be, or after it; and whether

the knowledge follows the object of knowledge, so that it discovers the object of knowledge as it is, or whether the object of knowledge follows the knowledge; and whether the nonexistent must be a thing such that it may be known and communicated, or cannot be a thing? According to the doctrine espoused by the man, the knowledge of the Necessary of Existence is an active knowledge, by which I mean that it is the cause of the existence of the object of knowledge, and it follows that He does not know the object of knowledge before its coming to be, nor after its coming to be, but His knowledge of it is His very generation of it. It follows from this that He does not know Himself, since He does not generate Himself. Or it follows that His knowledge in relation to things is an active knowledge, and His knowledge of Himself is a passive knowledge. In that case His knowledge of Himself is not the same as Him Himself, and His knowledge of Himself is not the same as His knowledge of things. What a calamity is this confusion on confusion! 'And he for whom God makes no light, is without light.'[62]

The Correct Doctrine

The prophets (upon them be peace!) eschewed these approaches in their methods, and prohibited men from delving into the majesty of God (Mighty and Majestic!), from disputing about Him and discussing His attributes. Their books are full and their words well known to the effect that an atom's weight does not escape His notice on earth nor in heaven,[63] that 'He knows the secret and yet more concealed',[64] that 'He knows what is before them and what is behind them',[65] that 'He is knower of the hidden and manifest',[66] and that 'He knows the traitor of the eyes and what hearts conceal',[67] without

[62] Qur'an 24:40.
[63] Qur'an 34:3; 10:61.
[64] Qur'an 20:7.
[65] Qur'an 20:110.
[66] Qur'an 23:92.
[67] Qur'an 40:19.

a difference between the universal and the particular, nor a distinction between the stable and unchanging, and between the generable and corruptible. On this basis they prescribed acts of worship including supplications and intimate prayers, which show that He hears, sees and responds. And He has the highest of viewpoints, so hearts aim towards Him, hands are raised to Him, glances are lowered for Him, necks bow to His power and His glory, tongues beseech Him for His pardon and His mercy. For one is without need through Him, while He is indispensable, and desire reaches out to Him not away from Him. Requests do not exhaust His treasuries, privileged positions do not alter His judgement, the needs of the needy are not sundered from Him, and the prayers of suppliants do not benefit Him. So this and the likes of it are on account of His knowledge of particulars and universals; indeed His knowledge transcends the two divisions and its compass is higher than the two ways. Rather, amongst His creatures are those who have this attribute—I mean the intellect grasps the universal and sense perception grasps the particular—but His knowledge (Exalted is He!) is beyond both intellect and sense perception: 'Visions do not grasp Him but He grasps visions, and He is the Subtle, the Aware.'[68]

The sages who are the authorities in philosophy have said: the First is not grasped by way of His essence but is only grasped by way of His traces. And each thing that grasps Him does so only in the measure of the trace which is consigned to it and it is endowed with. So each animal praises Him in the measure of what it bears of His workmanship, and of the trace of [His workmanship] which it finds in its nature. And since man's endowment with His works is more ample and his share of His graces more numerous, his cognition is more powerful and his praise more comprehensive. Since the rank of the archangels which are in the highest heaven is [yet] more elevated and exalted, and the graces of workmanship in respect of their substances are more radiant and magnificent, their cognitions are

[68] Qur'an 6:103.

purer. And just as the animal cannot attain the modes of man's cognitions, likewise man cannot attain the modes of the archangels' cognitions. And none of them can attain the mode of the Creator's comprehension of all existents (Exalted is He!), summarily and in their details, their universals and their particulars. Moreover one universal does not distract Him from another, nor one particular from another, and both of them are equal in relation to Him. It ought not to be said 'He knows things before their coming to be or after their coming to be'. For 'before', 'after' and 'with' are temporal characterisations, and His knowledge (Exalted is He!) is not temporal, but times are equal in relation to it. It does not—if Ibn Sīnā deems it universal—depart from being *temporal*, as he believed in regard to the eclipse. Instead, temporal knowledge changes with the change of time, but non-temporal knowledge does not change at all with the change of time. Knowledge might be universal and be in a time! Rather, the universal is inconceivable in regard to Him (Exalted is He!), like the categorical and conditional propositions which he used in regard to the eclipse—I mean '*if* it is so and so, *then* it is so and so'. The knowledge of the Creator (Exalted is He!) is higher than that, so it is not conditional upon propositions like 'if it is so and so, then it is so and so'.

It is amazing that he glosses intellection and knowledge sometimes as abstraction from matter, and sometimes as origination. How can what is abstracted from matter be conceived of as being active? For abstraction is a negation in meaning, i.e. 'it is not in matter'. And if it is active (i.e. necessitating an act and an existent) how can it be universal, when the universal is not actually found in individuals?

Thus it is known from all that, that His knowledge (Exalted is He!) is above the two divisions and higher than the two ways. Its relation to universals and particulars, changing times, and different places, is a single relation: 'Does He not know what He creates? And He is the Subtle, the Aware'.[69]

[69] Qur'an 67:14.

Do we not choose to predicate man and angel with 'speech'[70] by equivocity? Likewise the 'intellect' which belongs to man and angel is by equivocity. For the angels do not intellect things through conceptualisation and assent, by means of definition and syllogism. Instead their intellections are beyond the two divisions—so what is your opinion about a knowledge higher than *all* the divisions? Is it then said 'it is universal or particular'? From the supplication of the Righteous Ones (upon them be peace!) [are the words]: 'O Thou Whom eyes do not see! O Thou of Whom opinions do not conceive! O Thou Whom describers do not describe!' That is, He is higher than sense perception, imagination and intellect. Then they say: 'O Thou Whom as soon as I seek I find! O Thou Whom as soon as I worship I find tranquillity in! O Thou Who, when He knows my loneliness, delights me with His protection! O Thou Who, when something comes between me and seeking refuge, grants me refuge!'

THE FIFTH ISSUE

On the Incipience of the World

The philosophers are of three opinions on this issue. A group of the ancients who were authorities in philosophy from Miletus and Samos arrived at the assertion of the incipience of the world's existents in respect of their principles, simple [bodies] and compounds; just as a party of the Muslims also arrived at it. A group from Athens and the Stoics arrived at the pre-eternity of their principles, consisting in intellect, soul, the separate substances, and simple [bodies], but not the elements and compounds. For the principles are above eternity and time, so temporal incipience does not come about for them, in contrast with compounds, which are below eternity and time, and they denied that motions were sempiternal. The doctrine of a party of the Muslims approximates to their doctrine, with their

[70] *Nuṭq* can also mean reason.

assertion of the pre-eternity of the words and letters.[71] The doctrine espoused by Aristotle and whoever followed him amongst his disciples, as well as whoever agrees with him amongst the philosophers of Islam, is that the world is pre-eternal, and circular motions are sempiternal.

We preface the investigation of what Ibn Sīnā said with two preambles. The first of them is in elucidation of the meaning of finitude and infinitude, and which of the divisions necessitates, and which does not necessitate finitude. And the second is in elucidation of the meaning of priority, posteriority and concurrence, and in how many ways they occur.

The First Preamble

They say: Finitude may be perceptual and it may be intellectual. Perceptual finitude only occurs through perceptual delimitation, and that is in accordance with two divisions, spatial and temporal. The spatial division is as the delimitation of a body is determined by another body's delimitation, and they agreed on the fact that a body infinite in extent in all directions or in a single direction is impossible. The temporal division is as the delimitation of a time for a body, is determined by another time. The moderns have said: Infinite times following one another in existence, and likewise infinite motions and moving things following one another in existence, are not impossible.

As for intellectual finitude, it only occurs through intellectual delimitation [i.e. definition], and that is in accordance with two divisions: the formal definition composed of the constituents[72] of the thing; or the descriptive definition composed of the concomitants[73] of the thing (through which it is in opposition and association) and composed of realities through

[71] The reference is to the doctrine of the uncreatedness of the Qur'an, particularly in its more radical Ḥanbalite form.

[72] The elements of the definition, namely, the genus and differentia.

[73] Inseparable accidents, or properties.

which intellectual existents are distinguished *without* being compounded from the constituents of their quiddity, such as the separate substances. And they have agreed on the fact that infinite causes and effects are incapable of actual existence.

The moderns amongst them say: Infinite souls and intellects either simultaneous in existence or following one another are not impossible. The criterion for that is that everything which has a perceptual position,[74] like body, or an intellectual position, such as the cause and the effect, *cannot* comprise what is infinite. While whatever does not have a perceptual position, like circular motions, or an intellectual one, like human souls, is *not* incapable of comprising what is infinite.

The Second Preamble: on Priority, Posteriority and Concurrence

Priority may be temporal, like the priority of the parent to the child; it may be spatial, like the priority of the prayer-leader to the led; it may be by nobility, like the priority of the learned to the ignorant; and it may be essential, like the priority of the cause to the effect. And they have added a fifth sense for it, namely, priority by nature, like the priority of one to two. A sixth sense can be added for it, namely, priority simply by existence, like the priority of the existentialiser to the existentialised.

The enumeration of divisions in what we have mentioned is not something demonstrable, so whoever adds or subtracts when he clarifies the meaning is correct. And just as priority and posteriority come down to these divisions enumerated, likewise concurrence comes down to them, commensurate with them. Thus something may be *with* something else temporally, spatially, in nobility, essentially, naturally and in existence; and

74 *Al-Waḍʿ*, 'position' (Gk. *to keisthai*), is one of Aristotle's categories. In it are combined the idea of the distribution of the parts of a subject, one to another, and the implication of a wider context within which this occurs. Circular motions have no position in this sense, because as completely self-contained they need no wider context, unlike rectilinear motions.

while it is 'with' something *temporally*, it may be prior to it *essentially*, or vice versa—and likewise in respect of any two divisions.

So Ibn Sīnā said: 'The world exists through the existence of the Creator (Exalted is He!) and is perpetual in existence through His perpetuity. So the Creator (Exalted is He!) is essentially prior to the world, with the priority of the cause to the effect. Nevertheless, the world is perpetual in existence through His perpetuity …'[75] And he set about proving what he said. He said: 'Pure intellect, which does not deceive, bears witness that the unitary essence, if it is in all its aspects as it was, and there was earlier nothing existing through it, and it is like that now, then there is also nothing existing through it now. But if *now* something comes to exist from it, an intention has occurred in the essence, or a will, or a nature, or a power and capability; or else something analogous to this, which had not been. It also bears witness that what is able both to exist *and* not exist only becomes actual—and it only preponderates for it that it exists—by way of some factor. If this essence, which is the cause, were there without the thing preponderating, then if it preponderates, there must be a preponderating factor. Otherwise its relation with that contingent thing would be as it was before—and no other relation would occur for it—so the matter would be as it was, and the contingency would still be a pure contingency. And if a new relation occurred for it, something would have occurred, and it would have to occur within its essence or outside it, and both of them are absurd.'[76]

He also said: 'How is a time of refraining and a time of engaging distinguishable in non-existence? By what does one time contrast with another? Moreover, the incipient only occurs by way of the inception of a state in the Origin, and that must either be a will or an accident, for otherwise nature does not incept, and compulsion and chance are false. In any case, there must be the incipience of an attribute or state; but if it occurs

[75] Compare Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, p. 252, and *Shifāʾ*: *Ilāhiyyāt*, p. 373.
[76] Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, pp. 254–5, and *Shifāʾ*: *Ilāhiyyāt*, pp. 376–7.

in Its essence, It becomes a substrate for incipients, and if it occurs in a separate substrate, there would be no substrate before the substrate;[77] and if it occurs *not* in a substrate, the argument about that incipient is like the argument about the world.'[78]

Moreover he said: 'The First Reality is an origin for Its acts, and the origin is prior to the act. So by what is It prior, is it by Its essence, or by a time? If It is prior simply by Its essence, that is correct, and we acknowledge it. If It is prior by a time, our argument reverts about that time itself. His existence (Exalted is He!) is eternal, so the times also are eternal. Thus we suppose in these infinite times infinite existents, and all that you impose on us in respect of incipients which are infinite, we impose on you in respect of times which are infinite!'[79]

'Like that is our argument about motions, since whatever is in motion needs a mover, and if the mover is in motion, a regress follows. So there must be an Unmoved Mover, and either It is a body or a soul or an intellect. In short it is necessary that It precedes the thing in motion by Its essence and is parallel to it in its time. This is like the light of the lamp and the rays of the sun, for they converge in time, yet the lamp is "prior" to the light. This is why you say "the lamp exists and so the light exists", but you cannot say "the light exists and so the lamp exists". Likewise you say "my hand moves and so the key moves in my sleeve", but you cannot reverse that.'[80]

[77] This ellipsis seems to mean that the substrate postulated for the will or accident, itself would need to be created through a will or accident. So, a will or accident without a substrate follows after all.

[78] Compare Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, pp. 255–6. This perhaps alludes to the doctrine of the Baṣran Mu'tazila, who held that the divine attribute of will (*irāda*) which because of its temporality cannot inhere in the divine essence, must subsist without any substrate although it is an accident.

[79] Compare Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, p. 256 and *Shifā'*: *Ilāhiyyāt*, p. 379.

[80] Compare *Ishārāt,* vol. 3, p. 514 ff.

The Rebuttal of Him

We will speak firstly about the claim and the ruling and we will explain the equivocation in it in respect of the word 'perpetuity' and 'existence'. So long as the point of controversy is not free from kinds of equivocation, the direction of the argumentation is not clear. Thus his statement firstly 'the world is existent through His existence' involves a little confusion, and he ought to say 'the world is existent through His existentiation', so that that gives notice of existential, essential priority. And in his statement 'perpetual in existence through His perpetuity', the term 'perpetuity' is equivocal, for the perpetuity of existence belonging to the Creator (Exalted is He!) is not with the meaning of the perpetuity of existence belonging to the world. Rather, the perpetuity of existence belonging to Him (Exalted is He!) is with the meaning that He is Necessary of Existence by His essence, and the necessary is that which, if its non-existence is hypothesised, an absurdity follows thereby. The perpetuity of existence belonging to the world, however, is with the meaning of the continuousness of time for it, or with the meaning that it is necessary by something else. And were its non-existence hypothesised, an absurdity would *not* follow thereby, for the two do not concomitate in existence, in the beginning and in perpetuity. Thus 'perpetuity' is not with a single meaning in the two existences, but with two meanings different in their reality, and 'existence' is not with a single meaning in the two perpetuities, but with two meanings different in their reality. So the ruling concerning it is abridged, and most of the divergences between scholars arise from the equivocity of terms.

Next, the greatest calamity, which they considered monstrous on the part of Ibn Sīnā, consists of delusive propositions and imaginary premises.[81] Through his bewitchment they were made to imagine 'that they moved rapidly. So Moses conceived a fear in himself. We said "Fear not! Verily, you are the

[81] The doctrine alluded to here as the 'greatest calamity' is that of the eternity of the world.

superior!"'[82] It is exactly the sophism of the Karrāmiyya in regard to 'space',[83] which he carried over to 'time', and 'I am not one to be frightened easily!'[84] Concerning his statement: 'The unitary essence, if it is in all its aspects (*jihāt*) as it was, and there was earlier nothing existing through it, and it is like that now, then there is also nothing existing through it now …'—we say: You affirm an 'earlier' and a 'now' beyond the world, or you postulate a time, or *two* times, one of which is prior and the other simultaneous. Yet if you postulate it on the basis of the doctrine of the opponent, the opponent does *not* affirm any time whatsoever beyond the world, neither prior (called 'earlier') nor simultaneous (called 'now'), just as he does not affirm any space whatsoever beyond the world, neither void nor full. This is like what the Karrāmite says: 'The unitary essence, if it is on all sides (*jihāt*) as it was, and nothing existed with it, then something existed with it—it must be on some side of it separate from it, by a finite or infinite separation.' Postulating a time for refraining and a time for acting is like postulating an empty space and an occupied space, and you know that since the existence of the Creator (Exalted is He!) is not spatial, neither an empty space nor an occupied space can be ascribed to Him. Likewise, since His existence (Majestic is His sublimity!) is not temporal, an empty time and an occupied time cannot be ascribed to Him such that one of them is called 'refraining from action' and the second 'acting'.

[82] Qur'an 20:66. God here reassures Moses when Pharaoh's magicians made their ropes and staves seem alive.

[83] The Karrāmiyya was a popular Islamic sect in the Iranian regions from the ninth to the thirteenth century CE. It was founded by Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Karrām (d. 869 CE), whose works *'Adhāb al-qabr* and *Kitāb al-Sirr* are only known through citation. His best-known teaching was the spatiality of God—given in interpretation of the verse 'The All-Merciful sat on the Throne' (Qur'an 20:5). Ibn Karrām may also have upheld the eternity of the world in some sense. The two doctrines come together in the discussion here. See 'Karrāmiyya', EI2, vol. 4, p. 667.

[84] The literal meaning of this Arabic proverb is: I am not one for whom worn-out water skins are rattled.

If he then says: 'If you do not affirm a "before" for the world, nor a finite or infinite time, you have in fact ruled the concomitance of the two existences: the existence of the Maker and the existence of the made. Likewise, if you do not affirm a time for refraining from action and a time for acting, you have expressly admitted concomitance', I say: he listened poorly, so he replied poorly! Concomitance in existence and time only follows when the existent is susceptible to time, but we have explained that the world cannot be with Him (Exalted is He!) in time, since it would necessitate that His existence be temporal. So temporal concomitance and combination are absurd, and temporal precedence and priority are also absurd. This is like the Karrāmite's question: 'If you do not affirm a separation—finite or infinite—beyond the world, you have ruled the concomitance of the existences of the Maker and the made', but it does not follow, since His existence (Exalted is He!) is not spatial.

He said: 'When you say "He did not act, then He acted" you have affirmed a time in which you make Him idle from activity, so that you distinguish a time of refraining and a time of engaging for Him. But if you do not affirm a time of idleness and refraining, you have agreed with me about necessitation and concomitance. For I say: the All-Generous cannot be idle from generosity. Thus they are concomitant.' I [Shahrastānī] say: A time of idleness and a time of engagement does not follow from our statement 'He did not act, then He acted', since in expression there is figuration and extended meaning. For in 'He did not act' there is a notification about the past, and in 'then He acted' there is an indication of the future—yet there is no past and future in non-existence. That is just as the opponent says: 'He originated the intellect, then He originated the soul, then matter, then the body'—and that also does not give notification about the past and the sequence of time after it.

In the intellect there is no time before time, nor time with time, just as there is no other world beyond the world, above it, nor alongside the world to the right, nor to the left, nor below the world, underneath. And I only affirm *idleness* from action

where the existence of action is conceivable—since action is what has a beginning, while pre-eternity is what does not have a beginning, and the combination of what has a beginning and what has no beginning is absurd. And when you say He is a maker in pre-eternity, you have combined the two sides of the contradiction—I mean the affirmation of having a beginning and the negation of having a beginning! Then would you not say: the Generous cannot be idle from the overflow of generosity *insofar as* [*its*] *existence is conceivable*? But when generosity is not conceivable, that is not called 'declaring idle'. Is it not [the case that] were someone to say: 'If the Maker does not bring into existence a body extending in dimensions infinitely, He is idle from the bestowal of generosity, or His generosity falls short in its perfection', it would be said: If the existence of an infinite body is impossible, the shortcoming devolves on the recipient of the generosity, not on the generosity of the Bestower?

Ibn Sīnā said: 'It is then conceivable for you in the judgement of the intellect to admit that He might have created the world temporally ahead of its time. If that is conceivable but He did *not* create, He was idle from generosity!'[85] I say: Intellectual conceptualisation in regard to time is like intellectual postulation in regard to space—virtually identical. Thus the imagination conceives of and the intellect postulates another world beyond the world, above and beneath, and postulates the volume of the universe as greater and lesser than it actually is—however, on condition that *it be essentially finite*, since the proof is established that an infinite body is impossible. Likewise the intellect postulates a time or an existent temporally prior to the world—however on condition that it be finite, for an infinite time is impossible as we will explain.

He said: 'The body has a natural position, so the hypothesis of infinity in regard to it is impossible, but time has neither a natural position nor an intellectual order, so the hypothesis of infinity in regard to it is conceivable.' I say: This difference

[85] Compare Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, p. 257.

between the two forms is ineffective, since the proof which demonstrates the impossibility of the existence of a body infinite in measure, *itself* demonstrates the impossibility of the existence of a period infinite in time and the existence of human souls infinite in number—since the middle term in it is primary things, amongst which is: that the lesser in existing numbers is not equivalent to the greater; and amongst which is that the lesser and the greater are only [found] in respect of finite numbers, and the lesser and greater are inconceivable in regard to what is infinite; and amongst which is that a determinate fraction cannot be realised for something infinite, such as a half, or third, or quarter.

We construct a proof from these premises for each form. Let us consider the argument first in respect of human souls. So we say: If an infinite number of human souls were to enter existence on Sunday, then it would not be possible to increase by a number of souls on Monday. For what is numerically infinite cannot increase in number. Yet it has increased! And the exception of the contradictory of the consequent entails the contradictory of the antecedent.[86]

Another argument[87] is that if souls were infinite on Sunday and they were also infinite on Monday, the lesser would be equivalent to the greater. But if souls vary in number, they must start from a soul with no soul before it. Therefore individuals will be finite, and they must start from an individual with no individual before it. Therefore motions and moving things will be finite, and they must start from a motion with no motion before it. Therefore time which quantifies the motion is finite, and it must start from a time with no time before it. And that is what we wanted to explain.

Another argument is that the existence of everything incepted by some cause depends on the existence of its cause.

[86] That is, contraposition.

[87] *Tarkīb* here translates Greek *sumploke* or *sunthesis,* i.e. the construction of an argument. See Friedrich Wilhelm Zimmermann, *Al-Farabi's Commentary and Short Treatise on Aristotle's* De Interpretatione (London, 1981), p. xxxviii.

Were the existence of that cause dependent on the existence of some other cause, it would lead to regress, and that is absurd because of the dependence. For what depends in its existence on the existence of something, its existence can only occur with that thing already existing. For were every cause to depend on a cause to infinity, this cause in respect of which the hypothesis arises would not occur, because of the dependence of its existence on the existence of what is infinite either *seriatim* or what is in existence *in extenso*—and that is not possible.

Then we transfer this same proof to human individuals, so we say: The existence of this man (and we point to Zayd) has depended on the existence of the sperm from which he was created, and the existence of the sperm depended on the existence of another man from whom it arose. Thus it regresses to infinity, and that is false, as we have all agreed on the absurdity of the existence of infinite causes and effects. However, they apply this rule only to efficient causes, while we enjoin exactly that on them in respect of material causes, the causes being equal in regard to the dependence of effects upon them. When it is thus established that souls and individuals are finite, and they only start from an origin they have, equally whether they are in existence *seriatim* or are simultaneous in existence and not *seriatim*, it is established following that, that circular motions and moving things are finite. Since if they were eternal in motion, the things engendered by these motions would be eternal in existence and infinite, yet it has been established that they are finite. So the time which quantifies the motions must be finite, and this is the goal that we wanted.

We also say: The proof which you mentioned for the impossibility of an infinite distance or an infinite body is that you hypothesise a point on the plane of the infinite body. You posit in your imagination an infinite distance, the beginning of which is this point, and you hypothesise another line parallel with that, which is shorter than it by a cubit. Then you superimpose the point on the point and the line on the line. Then it must either be that the two lines remain infinite or else the smaller

falls short. If the two lines remained infinite, *the smaller would be equivalent to the greater.* And if it falls short from the infinite extremity by the measure of a cubit less, *the infinite becomes divisible and finite,* so what is parallel with it becomes finite. Thus it is clear that an infinite body, or distance within a body, is inconceivable.

Then we transfer this same proof to the numbers of human souls and the numbers of circular motions. They only distinguish between the two forms insofar as body has a position, so two lines can be hypothesised within it starting from a point, to infinity, while souls and [circular] motions have no position. It is said: Mere position and the lack of it have no impact on the distinction. For the line hypothesised in the body is imaginary, and anything you suppose in regard to an imaginary line can be supposed in regard to an imaginary number. Thus, hypothesise 'Zayd' and think of him as a point, and hypothesise his ancestors as a straight line [reaching] to infinity, and hypothesise ''Amr' and think of him as a point falling short of Zayd by an ancestor, or two ancestors, or three—and think of his ancestors to infinity, as a line. Then suppose that Zayd and ʿAmr are *twins* in existence, and carry through the proof to its conclusion. We showed earlier a kind of order in respect of individuals as there is in respect of causes and effects. The order in respect of causes, souls and individuals is like position in respect of bodies and distances—and the [one] proof is just like the [other] proof, neck and neck.[88]

Then know that [vicious] circularity in respect of sperm and man, eggs and chickens, and seeds and trees, is only interrupted if you specify the start from one of the two sides of the cycle. Otherwise the existence of one of them would depend on the existence of the other, and one of them would not occur without the other. That would lead to neither occurring at all, yet the two *have* occurred. So there is an inevitable break in the cycle at one of the two, and the starting point for human individuals with what is more perfect is more appropriate.

[88] Literally: like two racehorses.

Amongst what is argued against Ibn Sīnā is that he mentioned in the *Shifā'* that reasoning from existence to the affirmation of the Necessary of Existence and from the Necessary of Existence to things, is more fitting and noble than reasoning from something other than [existence] to [the affirmation of the Necessary of Existence].[89] Concerning that he said: 'We do not doubt that there is existence, and it is subdivided into "necessary in itself" and into "contingent in itself" ...' and he spoke about the two subdivisions.[90] So I say: If one of the two subdivisions is contingent in relation to its essence, and the contingent is what is neither inevitably existent nor inevitably non-existent, rather the two sides of it (existence and non-existence) are equal in the intellect, then if the aspect of existence preponderates over the aspect of non-existence, it needs a preponderator. Up to this point is the area of agreement, with the self-evidentness of the proof. Then I say: The preponderator must either be an existentialiser or be a necessitater. It is false that it is a necessitater, since the contingent is what fluctuates between existence and non-existence, not what fluctuates between necessity and contingency. Consequently, the preponderator is a preponderator of existence over non-existence, not a preponderator of necessity over contingency, and it is a bestower of existence, not a bestower of necessity. Rather, necessity adheres to the contingent subsequent to its existence *in view of its cause*, while existence is provided it by the existentialiser *in view of its essence*, since the contingent is neither inevitably existent nor non-existent. It may not be said 'the contingent is neither inevitably necessary nor contingent', since that is self-contradictory both in wording and meaning, and the gist of the statement comes down to [the proposition] that the contingent is *not* inevitably contingent! How could that be when contingency is its very quiddity? And the quiddity of the thing is inevitable for it and the essence

[89] *Ishārāt*, vol. 3, pp. 482–3. Al-Shahrastānī perhaps confuses it with *Shifā'*: *Ilāhiyyāt*, p. 27.

[90] Ibn Sīnā, *Najāt*, p. 235.

is not to be parted from *itself*. Thus it is ascertained that the preponderator is an existentialiser, not a necessitater, and the imagined concomitance completely collapses.

A point of inquiry remains as to when the contingent comes into relation with the Necessary, and in how many ways the act is related to the agent, and the subject of power to the powerful? As for when—there is *no* 'when', for no disengagement and engagement, and time of activity and time of inactivity, can be supposed, since the times are alike, and one time is only preferred to another time by reason of a particularising factor. And when the Agent is as He was and nothing is incepted, no particularising factor and preponderator is incepted, whether as His concomitant in existence or whether He precedes it.

According to these people, however, existence only preponderates over non-existence in respect of the contingent in itself through emanation from His essence (Exalted is He!). So they are to be questioned about emanation and necessitation itself. It is said: what is it that entails His being emanative and necessitating? Just as they questioned us about the time of emanation and necessitation. Their reply is that the essence from which something emanates is nobler than an essence from which nothing emanates. It is said to them: This suggests that He acquired perfection through emanation, yet the essentially perfect does not acquire perfection from anything else. They say that emanation from Him derives from His perfection, not that His perfection derives from His emanation. It is said: In that case He is not *essentially* emanative and necessitating, rather the existents emanate from Him and become necessary without His emanating them and His necessitating them. Moreover, this is the characterisation of derivation, and the derivative is always after the source of derivation, in existence—however, it is not ascribed to the source of derivation by intention and essentially, but by derivation and accidentally.

So you have demanded from us a time and cause of origination, and we demand from you a basis and cause of origination! You forced upon us the incipience of an incipient which is *not*

due to an incipient entity, and we force upon you the existence of existents derivatively and by accident, not by choice and primary intention—nature and chance being false, without access to His perfection (Exalted is He!).

Rather, we find essentially contingent things have entered existence, I mean one aspect of them has preponderated over the other, and we say: there must be a Preponderator without any contingency in any way, and the relation of contingents to Him (Exalted is He!) is necessary. The kinds of relation are various, and amongst them is emanation and necessitation, and amongst them is nature and natural inclination, and amongst them is purpose and rationale, and amongst them is will and choice, and intention and preference. It is up to you to select the noblest from amongst them. The revealed canons specify the nobility of the relation by way of choice and will, creation, command and dominion, because of the perfection of majesty and honour in this relation, and because of the deficiency and imperfection in the other ways. For in necessitation and emanation there is the analogue of reproduction and generation, while in nature and natural inclination there is the analogue of constraint and need, and in purpose and the demand of the cause[91] is the reality of the need. And God (Exalted is He!) transcends them all: 'Blessed be the name of your Lord, Owner of Majesty and Honour!'[92]

The Correct Choice

We have explained that priority, posteriority and concurrence are of four sorts: priority by time, priority by space, priority by nobility and priority by essence. Priority by nature and priority by existence alone have been added to it. A distinction was made between them and priority by essence in that the priority of one to two is known, and one does not *essentially* bring two about. So it comprises another meaning, namely, priority

[91] *'Illa*, 'cause', can also mean 'disease' or 'imperfection'. The *'illa* causes ('demands') because of its neediness.

[92] Qur'an 55:78.

by nature. Then the priority of the giver of existence to the receiver of existence is also beyond essential causation. And we have explained that the bestower of existence is one thing and the bestower of necessity another—it may be said 'it exists through it, so it is necessary', while it may not be said 'it is necessary through it, so it exists'.

When this principle on priority and posteriority is established, it is clear that all the mentioned senses also apply to concurrence. So we go back and say: The world is not *with* God (Exalted is He!) in time, for the existence of the Creator (Exalted is He!) is not temporal. Then just as His existence (Exalted is He!) does not precede the world's existence in time, likewise it is not with it in time. Neither is the world *with* Him (Exalted is He!) in space, for His existence is not spatial. Then just as He is not above it in space, He is not with it to the right or left in space. Neither is the world *with* God (Exalted is He!) in nobility, for the Necessary of Existence cannot be equated with the possible of existence in nobility. Neither is the world *with* God (Exalted is He!) by essence, according to them because the necessitated is not with the necessitater by essence, and according to us because the existentialised is not with the existentialiser by essence. Neither is the world *with* God (Exalted is He!) by nature, for His existence is not in the manner of number, and 'God was, and nothing was with Him.' The Prophet (upon him be peace!) was asked about the start of this affair, so he said 'God was, and nothing was with Him'.[93] Thus he divulged the secret of the question, set down the very text of the maxim, and cut right through the matter with what dents the blade and strikes at the joint.

So if nothing is with Him in any of the senses of concurrence, He (Exalted is He!) is prior to everything in every sense of priority. And it cannot be said: 'The Necessary of Existence is prior to the contingent of existence by essence, yet is *with* it in some other sense, such as the priority of the lamp to the

[93] Prophetic hadith: see Bukhārī, LIX, 1; also Ibn Bābūya, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd*, ed. Hāshim al-Ḥusaynī al-Ṭihrānī (Beirut, [1387/1967]), p. 67.

light and the motion of the hand to the motion of the ring.' For something might be prior to something by essence, yet be with it in time, like the two examples mentioned, [only] *because their existence is temporal.* But this characterisation is inapplicable in respect of the Creator (Exalted is He!), for He is sanctified above time and He cannot be prior by essence yet parallel in time. Nor can He be parallel in existence, for we have explained that the existentialiser is prior to the existentialised in existence, and because of this they say 'Existence in Him (Exalted is He!) is more appropriate and primary'. So the issue has been unveiled like the morning's dawn, and the occasion of uncertainty is explained. And the dispute reverts to the fact that beginningless incipients, circumscribed by existence *in extenso* or *seriatim* and consecutively, are incapable of existing. We have explained that convincingly.

Amongst the celestial existents are ones separate from materiality, abstracted from matter, hallowed above spatial confines, temporal conditions and corporeal accidents, which have an essential beginning and existential origin, and which the Creator (Exalted is He!) originated by His power absolutely and produced according to His will directly. They are the loci of manifestation for the perfect, pure and untainted Words, and the Words are their sources.[94] What is below them are the stars and moving spheres which are the temples of those spiritual entities. The aeon and time only begin in view of the incipience of movement, and the movement [of the stars and spheres] only begins in view of natural longing and the striving in pursuit of their perfections. So temporal primacy only belongs to moving things, and essential primacy only belongs to the separate substances. And the Lord (Exalted is He!) is the First without any first which was prior to Him, and the Last without any last which will be subsequent to Him. For He is 'the First and the Last', i.e. His existence is *not temporal*, 'and the Outward and the Inward', i.e. His existence is *not spatial.*[95]

[94] 'The perfect words', *al-kalimāt al-tāmmāt,* is Qur'anic. See Qur'an 2:124, 6:115 and 10:82.

[95] The two quotations are from Qur'an 57:3.

Such antonyms coincide in meaning in His case (Exalted is He!), and time and place are twins competing in a single womb, sucking from a single breast, and mollified in a single cradle. So strike down the eternalist with the corporealist and the corporealist with the eternalist, and seek out the religion of God (Exalted is He!) between the extremist and the shortcomer![96] The majesty of God (Exalted is He!) transcends imaginations and intellects, *a fortiori* space and time.

Wherever expression, with its instrument of metaphor, expands in the horizons of thought, wandering in the courts of the One Sought—that whose light is sought becomes obscure, that whose effusion is desired dwindles, the tool becomes blunt, the circumstances go astray, the human intellect comes to naught at it, and the expedient is changed into ineffectuality. Thus there is no recourse—subsequent to these ideas over which the sun of grandeur rises, and which it bakes in the seas' waves and disperses in the ways of the winds—except reliance on the explicit and pure Ḥanīfite Revelation,[97] for it is utterly congenial and in no way distressing. And even though it does not quench to satiety, neither does it leave thirsty!

When I brought the discussion on this issue to this point, and wanted to start on the sixth and seventh issue, I was diverted from their exposition by something the heaviness of which distressed me, and the burden of which weighed heavily on me, consisting in the trials of the time and the blows of misfortune. And to God complaints are addressed and upon Him is reliance in adversity and prosperity! So I confine myself

[96] 'Seek out the religion of God …' etc. Compare Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn al-akhbār*, ed. Aḥmad Zakī al-ʿAdawī (Cairo, 1343–48/1925–30), vol. 1, pp. 326–7.

[97] *Ḥanīf*, pl. *ḥunafāʾ*, is a Qur'anic term for a follower of primordial monotheism, especially Abraham (e.g. Qur'an 2:135). Islam was seen as reviving this religion predating Judaism. The term probably comes from Syriac *hanpo*, pl. *hanpe*, a pagan. By extension, in Syriac it meant a person of Hellenistic culture, philosophically-minded, thus a monotheist. Then, in Aramaean circles these secondary connotations of *hanpo* overshadowed the meaning 'pagan'. See 'Ḥanīf', EI2, vol. 3, p. 165.

to mentioning the rudiments of these issues consisting in questions, doubts, problems and the deficiencies of intellects, and whoever solves them is worthiest of them, if God (Exalted is He!) wills.

The Deficiencies of Intellects

The sage seeks out the cause for each thing and the reason for each incipient—either an efficient cause, or a material cause, or a final cause, and rarely the formal cause is sought out. Then the first thing asked concerns the enumeration of principles: are they comprehended in a known number, or are they unlimited and infinite? If they are comprehended by a number, then no number is more appropriate than another. Amongst the ancients there is he who says there are four principles—the First, the intellect, soul and matter; amongst them is he who says five, adding nature; amongst them is he who says six, adding void; and amongst them is he who says seven, adding eternity and time.

Ibn Sīnā inclined to [the view] that there are nine, namely the separate intellects. Sometimes he added to that, so that he thereby reached forty odd intellects. And sometimes he would say: 'The separate entities are as numerous as the number of directing souls, and the souls are as numerous as the number of spheres, and perhaps astronomical observation shows that there are nine.' What is it that will free us from this perplexity, and who is it who will save us from this predicament?

A Problem

The separate entities are distinguished by differentiae pertaining to species such as speech for man,[98] or by individual accidents such as shape and form for man, or in some other way such as what he stipulated to the effect that they are distinguished by *essential realities*. This last division is unknown, for

[98] *Nuṭq* could also mean 'reason'. See note 70.

the term 'substantiality' includes them by an essential inclusion, as their genus. So there must be a distinction by way of an essential differentia pertaining to species, and there must be individual peculiar accidents, such that each one can be pointed out through an intellectual indication as this or that. That can only be through bodies which belong to them, such as the spheres. So in consequence they would not be separate, abstracted from matter in every respect, and no difference would occur between them and between human souls. In that case shapes would reside in them, via the states of the motions of the spheres, as they reside in human souls, via the motions of bodies. In general they would depart from being separate in every respect.

Problems

The body is compounded of matter and form, and requires an efficient cause. So what is the cause of the existence of matter, what is the cause in respect to the existence of form, and what is the cause of their compounding together? If the contingency in the essence of the First Intellect is the cause of the existence of matter, then contingency is likewise in every existent other than the Necessary of Existence, so let it be conducive to the existence of matter. However, contingency is a non-existential nature, so it is not conducive to the existence of anything, and the cause in the existence of form is incapable of being the contingency of the thing's existence. Instead it is the 'necessity of its existence by another'. The necessity of existence by another in every existent is through the First Intellect in a single manner, so let it be conducive to every form. In general, everything which they mention in the way of kinds of conduciveness amongst causes, exists amongst effects, so the cause is not more worthy of its status of cause than the effect.

Next: the predisposition in matter is not the same for all matters, but different. So what is the *cause* of the difference in them? For forms only differ due to the difference in the predispositions of matters. Yet prime matter does not differ in

predisposition, but is predisposed to receive the form of corporeality alone. As for the size of forms and shapes in regard to smallness and largeness, the less and the more, and particularity and influence—they require causes consistent with them. So what are these causes and what is it that brings about the peculiarity of prime matter to receive the form of the body of the universe in accordance with its size, neither exceeding it nor falling short?

You have sought out the cause of its sphericity, so you said: When the cause is single and the matter single, it is necessary that the body be equivalent in its parts, namely, the shape of the sphere. For there is no angle in the sphere, by which it is distinguished as a quadrangular or triangular or other figure. Then why have you not sought another cause for the *size* of the sphere? And why have you not sought a cause for every celestial sphere—be it a star, or orb [i.e. heaven]—such that the sizes of the magnitudes and bodies are thereby explained? The same statement is to be made about their distances, locations, movements and periods. For [Ptolemy's] *Almagest* only establishes the manner of their existence and does not seek out the cause of their existence, and the Metaphysics includes one of their final causes, but not the efficient or material.[99] The demand confronts them in these issues—the confrontation of the creditor's demand to the procrastinating debtor. And 'If your neighbours fail you, rely on the master of your house!' 'I did not make them witness the creation of the heavens or the earth or their souls ...'[100]

[99] What al-Shahrastānī means by this reference to 'the Metaphysics' (*al-Ilāhiyyāt*) is problematic. It seems that he is referring to the Metaphysics of Ibn Sīnā's *Shifā'*. But in his reply, Ṭūsī rightly points out against al-Shahrastānī that the Metaphysics certainly considers the efficient, material and formal cause of the spheres, in addition to the final, 'to the extent that intellects grasp it'. Ṭūsī, *Maṣāriʿ al-muṣāriʿ*, ed. Ḥasan al-Muʿizzī (Qum, 1405/1984), p. 192. Perhaps instead al-Shahrastānī specifically has in mind the limitations of Aristotle's 'Metaphysics' (*Mā baʿd al-ṭabīʿa*), in which case he has entitled it misleadingly.

[100] Qur'an 18:51.

A Doubt and a Problem

If whatever is in motion needs a mover, and if that mover is in motion, it also needs a mover, and the proposition regresses till it arrives at an Unmoved Mover. That First Mover must then either be at rest, or it must be neither at rest *nor* in motion! If it is at rest—rest does not bring about motion, which is its opposite. And if it is neither at rest nor in motion, it must be an intellectual substance. So what is it which necessitates in it that it be a mover for other than it—is it a longing which it harbours or a perfection it seeks?

Then after that of necessity: is reaching its perfection possible for it or impossible? If it is possible and it reaches it, then it must cease from moving others, so all the moved things must come to rest. But if it is impossible and it does not reach its perfection at all, then in consequence it is troubled, always afflicted, continuously sorrowful, steadily *increasing* in imperfection, by its motion only growing in longing for its perfection, and by its longing only growing in remoteness from its perfection. If it is said 'it obtains a partial perfection in each motion, so its enjoyment of each partial perfection diverts it from suffering longing for its total perfection', it is replied: but its inability to obtain its total perfection diverts it from the enjoyment of its partial perfection!

Stopping-places of the Intellect

If the body of the universe is a finite sphere, then it has no upper surface, since there is no void nor plenum beyond it such that a surface which is upper would be in evidence for it. Yet if you imagine something which is either a void or plenum, in that case an upper surface is indeed conceivable to you. Then when the sphere moves, two opposite poles are in evidence. So what is it which necessitates the specification of the two poles in the place which they are now in—the parts of the sphere being indistinguishable and equal, and one part no more suitable than another? By this question I simply seek the efficient

cause, not the final. Then if the motions of the bodies are spatial, they necessitate the tearing of these bodies, yet they are insusceptible to tearing. If they are positional,[101] positional motions only happen if spatial motion precedes them. Space, like the square, has a position, so if its basis moves towards another, non-quadrangular shape, a motion occurs to it which is in the relation of some of its parts to others, and there must be the motion of transference for some of the parts, so that the relation of the rest of the parts to each other would change. Otherwise the existence of motion within the position would be inconceivable.

A Doubt

'Cause' and 'origin' are said of everything whose existence is complete and through which something else exists. Then, the completeness of its existence may be from itself and it may be from other than it. What is from other than it may be like the part which belongs to that which is its effect, such as the form and matter belonging to the body, or it may not be, like the agent and *telos*—according to the division which Ibn Sīnā mentioned in his books, his aim being to comprehend the causes in four: the matter, form, agent and *telos*. So the doubt about it is that matter's existence is incomplete, yet something else exists through it. Nay, its existence is only brought to completion by form, so that a body comes to exist through the two of them. But how can something else come to exist through something whose *own* existence is incomplete?

Moreover, the division he mentioned does not comprehend all the kinds of cause. Something else other than the kinds which he mentioned might exist, as they consider concerning 'instrument'. And what he mentioned about establishment through [an instrument] is a verbal reservation which does not

[101] 'Positional motion' (*al-ḥaraka al-waḍʿīyya*) designates the self-contained circular motion of the spheres, as opposed to rectilinear motion. See note 74.

preclude the sense of causality and effectuality [for an instrument]. Were it said: 'The agent and *telos* are sufficient in causality, matter being as it were the instrument, and form as it were the form in the agent itself'—whoever adds or subtracts from the division has leeway, and no absurdity follows thereby.

The Proof of Prophecy Through the Faculties and Methods of Intellect

That which transfers material human intellects from potentiality to actuality must be an actual intellect, for they may not by themselves emerge to actuality, and what is potential like them may not transfer them—something incontrovertibly proven. Yet why must that thing which transfers, which is an actual intellect, be specifically single—namely the Active Intellect which is the director of the sphere of the moon, so that it is called the Dispenser of Forms—to the exclusion of the intellects which are the directors of the rest of the spheres, or in association with them? And why might not all the forms be attributed to the First Intellect which is the mediator of the universe, so it would be the 'Active Giver', and its essence would not be multiplied by the multiplicity of the forms, just as the essence of the last intellect is not multiplied thereby? Nay, why might not all the forms be attributed to the Necessary of Existence, the First (Exalted and Hallowed is He!) without His essence being multiplied by the multiplicity of the forms? Blessed be God, the One, the Omnipotent, the Powerful, the Almighty, the Generous, the Giving!

If you seek out something proximate amongst the celestials and you deem the last sphere and its director the most proximate, so that it would be the one which emanates on the matters the forms to which they are predisposed, then why do you take spatial proximity into consideration in regard to *intellectual* substances? Do you not judge that intellectual substances are equal in remoteness and proximity? And do you not believe that the Necessary of Existence is more proximate than everything proximate, so that *He* is the transferer of what is potential

to actuality amongst the intellects? 'God is near to those who believe, so He transfers them from the darkness to the light.'[102] Or do you not admit that amongst human intellects there is what is an actual intellect, so it would be the proximate cause, supported through holy power, as you admit the distinction of some intellects through intuitional power? You enjoin a precedence amongst souls and a hierarchy amongst intellects, and precedent and hierarchical things reach a limit in a single one which is the most superior, so they do not regress [to infinity]. 'O Prophet! We have sent you as a witness, a giver of glad news, a warner, a summoner to God by His permission, and as an effulgent lamp.'[103] O God, benefit us by that which You teach us, and teach us that by which You benefit us, by the truth of the Chosen Ones amongst your servants—upon them be peace!

[102] Qur'an 2:257.
[103] Qur'an 33:46.

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